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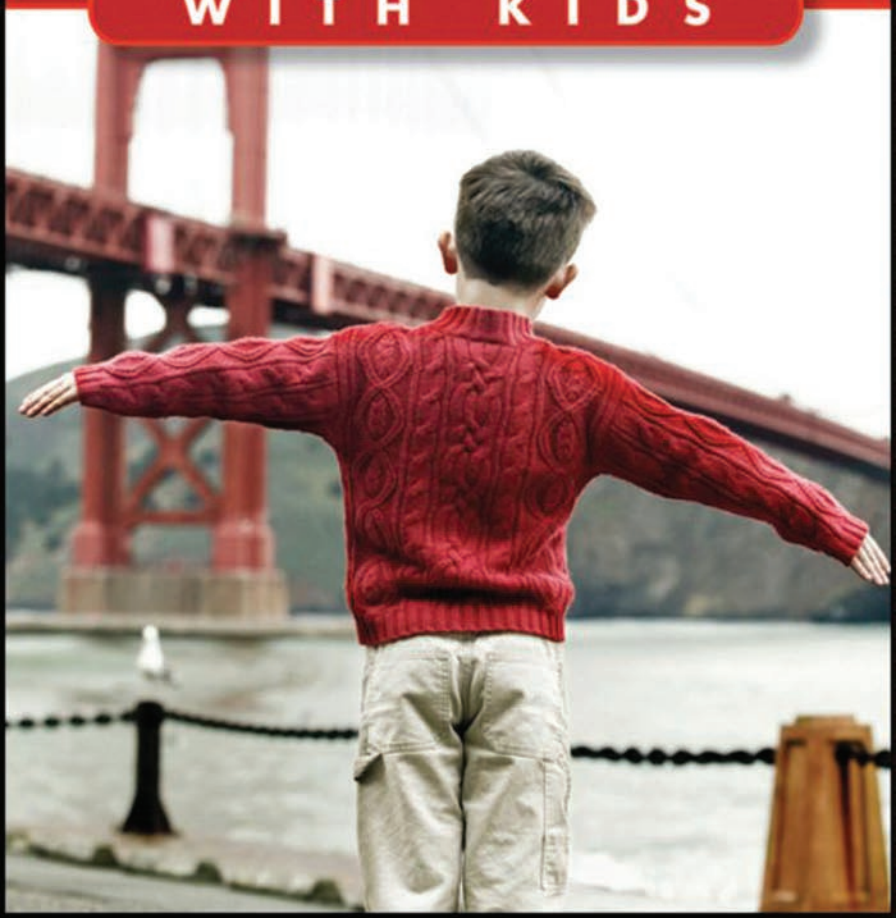
SAN FRANCISCO

WITH KIDS



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San Francisco

Frommer's®

San Francisco with Kids

4th Edition

by Noelle Salmi

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For my husband, Mika Salmi, and my daughters, Annika and Natasha.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Noelle Salmi is a freelance writer who lived and worked in several U.S. cities and many foreign countries before moving to San Francisco in 2001. In addition to her work promoting investment overseas, she worked at a major daily newspaper and later at CNN in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Associated Press in Berlin, Germany; and United Press International in New York City. Her writing has appeared in the *Santa Clara Valley Weekly*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *The West Side Spirit*, *Emerging Markets*, *USA Today*, *Bay Area Parent,* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. She is also the author of previous editions of *Frommer's San Francisco with Kids* and of *Frommer's San Francisco Day by Day* (1st and 2nd editions). She lives in San Francisco with her husband Mika and three children Annika, Natasha, and Aksel.

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AN INVITATION TO THE READER

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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AN ADDITIONAL NOTE

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

Other Great Guides for Your Trip:

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FROMMER'S STAR RATINGS, ICONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Every hotel, restaurant, and attraction listing in this guide has been ranked for quality, value, service, amenities, and special features using a star-rating system. In country, state, and regional guides, we also rate towns and regions to help you narrow down your choices and budget your time accordingly. Hotels and restaurants are rated on a scale of zero (recommended) to three stars (exceptional). Attractions, shopping, nightlife, towns, and regions are rated according to the following scale: zero stars (recommended), one star (highly recommended), two stars (very highly recommended), and three stars (must-see).

In addition to the star-rating system, we also use six feature icons that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice, and unique experiences that separate travelers from tourists. Throughout the book, look for:

Finds	Special finds—those places only insiders know about
Fun Facts	Fun facts—details that make travelers more informed and their trips more fun
Moments	Special moments—those experiences that memories are made of
Overrated	Places or experiences not worth your time or money
Tips	Insider tips—great ways to save time and money
Value	Great values—where to get the best deals

The following abbreviations are used for credit cards:

AE American Express	DISC Discover	V Visa
DC Diners Club	MC MasterCard	

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- Podcasts, interactive maps, and up-to-the-minute events listings
- Opinionated blog entries by Arthur Frommer himself
- Online travel message boards with featured travel discussions

1

How to Feel Like a San Francisco Family

San Francisco has always had a way of calling me back. Although I spent most of my life in a whirlwind of travel, it was punctuated by stays in this glorious part of the world. I was born not far from the city limits, and my parents often brought my brother and me into town. We moved to Puerto Rico when I was still young and, after that, to Brazil and then Uruguay. When we returned to the U.S. years later it was to Southern California; but because my parents retained a fondness for San Francisco, we visited the city regularly.

Perhaps it was inevitable that I would attend college in the Bay Area, so that weekends could be spent exploring San Francisco with roommates and friends. Upon graduating, I was off again: I worked at a newspaper in Brazil, wrote for the Associated Press in Germany, earned a graduate degree in New York, and was then based there while I worked to promote investment overseas. In between travel to far corners of the earth, I met my soon-to-be husband, a nomad like myself. Although we moved to Seattle, my international job kept the frequent flier miles multiplying—until the birth of our first daughter, when all the travel came to a screeching halt.

Then it happened. San Francisco harkened again. My husband's work brought us here, where our second daughter was born a few months later. Five years after that, our son was born. And here we are: eight years, and three kids, later we are a certified San Francisco family—going to every birthday party venue in town; trekking out to the beach in summer, bundled up in jeans and jackets against the fog; loading up the kids' bikes in the car on weekends to take them somewhere flat to ride; buying our organic greens at the Farmer's Market; and considering steamed pork buns, shrimp dumplings, and stuffed crab claws (in other words, dim sum) a fine meal for breakfast.

Through all the travel, the Bay Area had always been my spiritual home, if not my real one. Now San Francisco is my family's true residence, one that welcomed us from the moment we arrived. It helps that the city is used to taking in people from all over the globe. Most of the San Franciscans we know seem to have started life somewhere else, although we're always impressed when we meet someone who actually grew up here. The city is so rich with history, culture, and little-known secrets that it's a treat to pick the brains of a lifelong resident. It's been especially exciting to begin writing guidebooks about San Francisco, giving me a terrific excuse to look a little deeper and learn a little more about the wonderful offerings here.

I've made an effort to provide some insights in this book that will make your family's stay in San Francisco more rewarding and memorable. Visits to the city's most famous attractions will certainly be enjoyable, but I hope that you take the time to stray off the beaten path—if even just a little. When in Fisherman's Wharf, consider skipping the T-shirt shops and candy vendors of PIER 39 and heading instead to the Hyde Street Pier, where you can get a real sense of the city's seafaring past (while the kids climb all over antique ships). In Chinatown, go ahead and check out the colorful tourist stores on

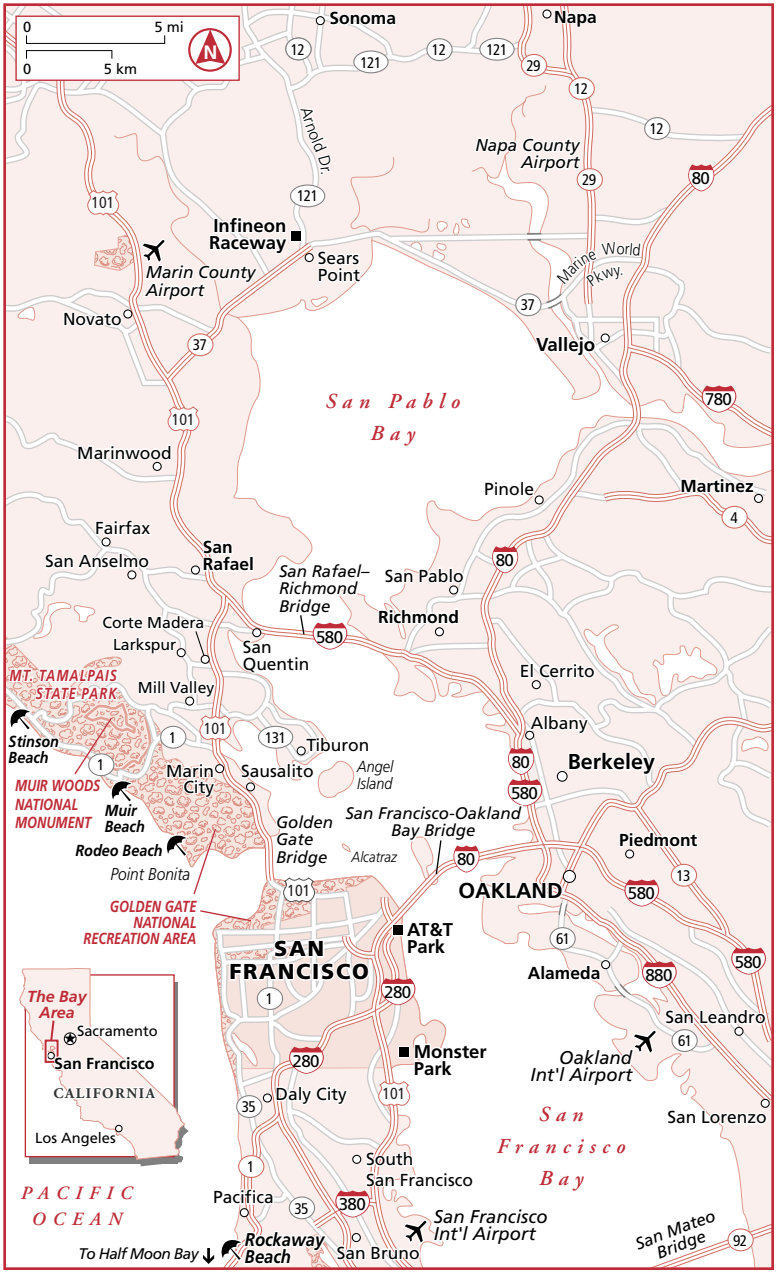
Grant Street, but don't miss the exotic and authentic grocers on Stockton Street. And although I know that cashew chicken at the big restaurant in the middle of Chinatown sounds appetizing, consider ordering dim sum out in the Richmond District instead.

One of the terrific things about San Francisco is that a whole lot of the sights and activities that appeal to tourists in general will appeal to families specifically. What kid doesn't enjoy a ride on a cable car? And although everyone loves a stroll along Crissy Field, younger ones will be especially delighted playing on the grassy hills and sandy beaches. Not to mention the ferry ride to Alcatraz Island, which is perfect family fare. Certainly, not every kid will be thrilled by a trip to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), but a terrific children's center is just across the street. For every adult attraction you ante up, I'll see you three that are fabulous with kids. In fact, having little ones is a great excuse to visit the Exploratorium, the California Academy of Sciences, and the San Francisco Zoo—all of which are first-rate.

So get started planning your trip. This chapter is a good place to begin; in it, I suggest some of our all-time favorite San Francisco family experiences, in addition to the best hotels and dining spots.

1 FROMMER'S FAVORITE SAN FRANCISCO EXPERIENCES

- **Shopping at the Ferry Plaza Farmer's Market:** Perhaps you haven't had a chance lately to stop and smell the roses, admire the tomatoes, or compare the peaches. If that's the case, hop on the F-Market streetcar to the Ferry Building and take a stroll around the best outdoor market in the Bay Area. It's a Saturday morning ritual for a great many San Franciscans who come down with their baskets and carefully select the season's finest from organic farmers and local purveyors of fresh sausages, free-range meats, olive oils, honey, and baked goods. The farmers offer tastes of their wares, so your kids may discover what freshly picked-at-their-peak fruits taste like—a revelation if they've never had a perfectly ripe pear or apricot. Don't eat breakfast first; along with coffee drinks and a huge array of morning breads, pastries, and sweets from the very nicest bakeries, local restaurants serve specialties that taste even better eaten with a view of the bay. A more limited farmers' market is also open on Tuesdays. See p. 161.
- **Eating Shrimp Dumplings for Breakfast:** If crab claws, pork buns, and steamed dumplings aren't your idea of Sunday brunch, it's time to branch out from omelets and pancakes. One of our favorite weekend morning activities is gathering with friends at a large table with a lazy Susan in the middle, while servers bring trays laden with bite-sized Chinese delicacies. If you're planning on staying downtown, Yank Sing is the place to go (One Rincon Center, 101 Spear St., at Mission St.; ✆ **415/781-1111**). If you're planning a walk at Land's End, consider hopping on the 38-Geary bus and trekking out to Ton Kiang (5821 Geary Blvd., between 22nd and 23rd aves.; ✆ **415/752-4440**) for a hearty pre-hike brunch. Just get there early, as tables fill up fast. See p. 124 and p. 152.
- **Strolling through Chinatown:** Just steps away from Union Square, you can enter another world—one decorated by bright red, green, and gold banners. The knickknack shops, traditional herbalists, vendors of ceremonial papers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Monster Park
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San Lorenzo
San Francisco Bay
South San Francisco
PACIFIC OCEAN
Pacifica
San Francisco Int'l Airport
To Half Moon Bay
Rockaway Beach
San Bruno
San Mateo Bridge
The Bay Area
Sacramento
San Francisco
CALIFORNIA
Los Angeles

San Francisco Timeline

1776 Spain leads the first colonizers to the area and establishes the Presidio of San Francisco and Mission Dolores, founding Yerba Buena (San Francisco).

1821 Mexico declares independence from Spain, and Yerba Buena remains under Mexican rule.

1846 Captain John Montgomery plants the U.S. flag into present-day Portsmouth Square to claim Yerba Buena for the United States. Yerba Buena is renamed San Francisco.

1848 James Marshall discovers gold at Sutter's Mill. New spaperman Sam Brannan publicizes the discovery, and the Gold Rush begins.

1848 Domingo Ghirardelli sails to San Francisco to join his partner, James Lick, and begin what is to become the city's most famous chocolate factory.

1849 Isadore Boudin, an experienced French baker, introduces the ordinary sourdough yeast used by miners to a French-style loaf of bread and creates San Francisco sourdough bread.

1868 The *Daily Morning Chronicle,* later the *San Francisco Chronicle,* begins publishing.

1873 Andrew Hallidie, inspired by an accident he witnesses when a team of horses slips on a rainy San Francisco hill, invents the cable car.

1887 George Hearst purchases a small daily newspaper, the *San Francisco Examiner,* to promote his race for the U.S. Senate. His son, William Randolph Hearst, turns it into a very successful tabloid.

1892 The "Ellis Island of the West," Angel Island, opens, initially, as a quarantine station.

1906 On April 18 at 5:12am, a major earthquake rocks San Francisco and starts more than 50 fires, which burn uncontrollably for 3 days. Two-thirds of the city is destroyed, 250,000 people are left homeless, and more than 675 are dead or missing.

1927 Modern-age hockey dawns for the Bay Area with the creation of the California Hockey League.

and incense, and grocery stores teeming with live frogs, crabs, and other wriggly seafood are all a visual and cultural treat. A stop by the Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Company just adds to the fun. See chapter 8 for a self-guided walking tour of the neighborhood.

- **Hanging Out at Cissy Field:** What better way to spend the day than to slow down and take in the views of the Golden Gate Bridge and the city from the Bay Area's newest national park? Kids can run around on the hills, check out the gift shop, pile up rocks, or play in the sand. Buy some nice sandwiches at the Warming Hut and enjoy a picnic at one of the many bayside picnic tables. See p. 160.
- **Riding Bikes down the Embarcadero:** The boulevard is wide and the street is

1934 Alcatraz Island becomes a federal prison.

1936 The San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge opens on November 12. It remains one of the largest bridges in the world and carries more than 270,000 vehicles each day—more traffic than any other toll bridge.

1937 The Golden Gate Bridge opens to pedestrian traffic on May 26 and to automobile traffic on May 27.

1945 The charter establishing the United Nations is signed in San Francisco's Herbst Theater.

1960 Candlestick Park opens for baseball and football. The last baseball game takes place in 1999.

1965 Jefferson Airplane opens at the Matrix, a club, on Fillmore.

1978 PIER 39 is built. One of San Francisco's most popular attractions, it gets more than 10 million visitors each year.

1989 On October 17 at 5:04pm, right before the start of the World Series between the Oakland A's and the San Francisco Giants, a 7.1 magnitude earthquake hits the Bay Area. One person dies at Candlestick Park from a heart attack.

2000 Pacific Bell Park (now AT&T Park), the home to the San Francisco Giants, opens.

2004 San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom issues more than 4,000 same-sex marriage licenses, which are later annulled by the state's Supreme Court. (That court legalized same-sex marriage in 2008, but it was defeated by a state-wide ballot proposition the same year).

2006 Thousands of residents line the streets before dawn on April 18 to mark the 100-year anniversary of "The Great Quake," falling silent at 5:12am. Eleven survivors of the original quake attend the event.

2008 The Castro Theatre hosts the world premiere of *Milk,* a film about San Francisco politician Harvey Milk, starring Sean Penn, who wins an Oscar for the role.

flat, making the Embarcadero an easy family ride. Start at the Bike Hut (see chapter 9) and cruise down the street past the piers, stopping by the Ferry Building to buy picnic food. Walk the bikes down Pier 7 and see if anyone's caught a fish or crab at the end of the pier. Continue toward PIER 39 and Fisherman's Wharf. It may become too crowded to pedal here, but once you reach the Hyde Street Pier, space opens up. Keep going until you get to Aquatic Park, where you can stop to eat your pre-packed lunch.

- **Boating on Stow Lake:** Pile into one of the rowboats, or pedal boats and circle this man-made lake as many times as you can. Relax as you admire the trees and revel in the laughter of the kids as they attempt to keep the craft from

bumping into other boats or landing on the bank. See chapter 9 for more information on this and other outdoor family adventures.

- **Checking Out the Scene at the Maritime National Historical Park:** Young kids will love exploring the antique ships of the Hyde Street Pier (p. 170), running around on the grass at Victorian Park, and gaping at the crazy swimmers in Aquatic Park who brave the Bay's chilly waters. All the while, grown-ups can marvel at the lovely scenery. Then everyone can grab a snack from the San Francisco Crepe Cart in The Cannery (p. 132), and perhaps listen to some music from a local performer.
- **Hanging Out in Golden Gate Park:** You don't need an agenda to fritter away the hours around San Francisco's most famous park. The antique carousel is a big draw, as is the Koret Children's Quarter, a world-class playground. The Japanese Tea Garden is so composed and elegant you'll want to meditate there, but the kids will prefer stepping over the stone walkways and scaling the Drum Bridge. Budding botanists will appreciate the dahlia garden outside the Conservatory of Flowers and will especially enjoy ogling the carnivorous plants inside. The de Young Museum tower affords super city views and the *Three Gems* structure in the sculpture garden is a great place to chill out for a moment. On Sundays, the park is closed to traffic; near 6th Avenue and Fulton Street, be sure to look for the skate dancers, who put on a fine show. See p. 173.
- **Traveling through the jungle and the heavens at the California Academy of Sciences:** This Golden Gate Park attraction deserves its own heading. Opened in late 2008 in a new award-winning home, the world's most eco-friendly museum will inspire the botanist, marine biologist, or astronomer in your child. Breathe in the moist air of the world's rainforests, soak up the scenery atop the living roof, fawn over the fishes of the Steinhart Aquarium, and experience space travel in the Planetarium. See p. 178.
- **Taking the Ferry to Marin:** Bundle up and catch a Blue and Gold Ferry (p. 185) from Pier 41 to Sausalito or Tiburon. You can take bikes on the boats if you like, but both villages are petite and walkable. The ride is glorious. Remain outside for the full effect of the wind and salt spray. On a clear day, you'll have trouble deciding where to look; the scenery ahead is as thrilling as the view behind you. Sausalito is very touristy, but the stores are fun for window shopping. Tiburon is even more upscale than Sausalito. It won't take long to tour the village; leave someone behind to claim a table at Guaymas, at 5 Main St., where drinks and passable Mexican food on the sunny deck make this trip a little vacation within your vacation.
- **Trekking Along the Land's End Trail:** Provided your child won't run off ahead of you, as the trail runs along a steep cliff, there's hardly a more beautiful place to walk in San Francisco. Start at the trail head on Camino del Mar, parking next to picturesque Lincoln Park, which is dotted with majestic Monterey Cyprus trees. Head west on the trail toward the Cliff House, pausing to admire the view from the "other" side of the Golden Gate Bridge, the sweeping Pacific Ocean, and the Marin Headlands to the north. See p. 186.
- **Cheering the Home Team at AT&T Park:** You don't even need to be a baseball fan to derive a lot of pleasure from an afternoon or evening at this gem of a baseball stadium (p. 265). Bleacher seats go on sale at the park on game days, but if you prefer something fancier, you can usually get good seats online from season ticket holders if

nothing's available at Giants Dugout Stores or at the park ticket booth. Kids will have a field day playing at the Coca-Cola Fan Lot playground and chowing down on the notable food concessions. Transportation is a breeze on the N-Judah streetcar; it deposits you at the front gate. American League partisans have the option of taking BART (the local commuter train) across the bay to the Oakland Coliseum.

2 THE BEST HOTEL BETS

- **Best All-Around Family Hotels:** The **Argonaut** (495 Jefferson St.; ✆ **866/415-0704** or 415/563-0800) is my hands-down favorite in this category. It's a charming hotel in a family-friendly neck of the woods. Several kid-friendly attractions are either next door or less than a block away: grassy Victorian Park, the Aquatic Park beach, the Hyde Street Pier, the cable car turnaround, and The Cannery. The whimsical lobby and its adjacent National Maritime Visitors Center will appeal to kids as well. The double queen rooms are well suited to families, and the in-house restaurant serves kids' meals in a beach pail. What more could you want? See p. 89. The warm and friendly **Serrano Hotel** (405 Taylor St.; ✆ **866/289-6561** or 415/885-2500) gives kids a toy upon check-in, offers kid-sized animal print robes for use during their stay, and has a game library available to guests. See p. 76. The **Handlery Union Square** (351 Geary St.; ✆ **800/843-4343** or 415/781-7800) also gets my vote, mainly for its outdoor, heated pool. See p. 78.
- **Best Amenities for Kids:** The **St. Regis** (125 3rd St.; ✆ **415/284-4000**) offers kids their own bathrobes, toys from the SFMOMA gift shop, cookies with their name on them, and special items in the minibar—provided parents call the concierge beforehand. See p. 87. The **Four Seasons** (757 Market St.; ✆ **415/633-3000**) supplies cookies and milk on arrival for kids 6 and under and root beer and popcorn for those 7 and up. Kids staying in their own rooms get a specially stocked minibar, and bathrobes are supplied in sizes to fit the whole family. The concierge will also send up other family items—from cribs to board games—on request. See p. 86. Older kids will appreciate the "gaming suites" in Japantown's **Hotel Tomo** (1800 Sutter St.; ✆ **877/738-7477** or 415/921-4000), which have the latest Sony PlayStation, Wii, and a 6-foot LCD projection screen. See p. 99.
- **Best Suites:** The **Hotel Beresford Arms** (701 Post St.; ✆ **800/533-6533** or 415/673-2600) has 60 Jacuzzi suites, half of which have full kitchens and half of which have kitchenettes. The guest rooms and bathrooms also offer plenty of floor space and all beds are queen beds. See p. 82. In Japantown, the **Hotel Kabuki** (1625 Post St.; ✆ **800/533-4567** or 415/922-3200) has family suites for the price of one-room junior suites, but with *shoji* screens that separate the kids in their own area, complete with Japanese futons on tatami mats. See p. 99. The homey suites at the **Cow Hollow Motor Inn & Suites** (2190 Lombard St.; ✆ **415/921-5800**) contain two bathrooms, two bedrooms, and a kitchen—and must be booked far in advance. For value and space, these offer the sweetest suite deal in town. See p. 97.
- **Best Indoor Pool:** You have to supervise your kids at every hotel pool, but if

your kids don't need you to swim with them, you can work out on the poolside cardio equipment at the **Hotel Nikko,** at 222 Mason St. (✆ **800/248-3308** or 415/394-1111). If you'd prefer to take it easy, the lounge chairs and Japanese hot tub, all under an attractive glass ceiling, are a relaxing alternative. See p. 69. The elegant infinity pool at the **St. Regis** (125 3rd St.; ✆ **415/284-4000**) is so inviting, parents will want to go for a swim even when the kids have had enough. See p. 87. **The San Francisco Marriott** (55 4th St.; ✆ **415/896-1600**) has an indoor pool, which isn't elegant, but is big, clean, and open from 6am to 11pm. See p. 87.

- **Best Outdoor Pool:** As you might have guessed, the competitors for this honor are few. Around Union Square, the award goes to the **Handlery** (351 Geary St.; ✆ **800/843-4343** or 415/781-7800) for a small, heated pool in a pleasant patio. See p. 78. Among Fisherman's Wharf hotels, the **Hyatt at Fisherman's Wharf** (555 N. Point St.; ✆ **800/223-1234** or 415/563-1234) fields far and away the nicest pool. See p. 90. The **Hotel Del Sol** (3100 Webster St.; ✆ **877/433-5765** or 415/921-5520) wins for the best poolside decor, with palm trees and a hammock, but the pool itself is miniscule. See p. 97.
- **Best In-House Entertainment:** The Top of the Mark at the **Mark Hopkins InterContinental** (1 Nob Hill; ✆ **800/662-6455** or 415/392-3434) is terrific for drinks, views, or weekend dinner and dancing. If the kids are old enough to leave tucked in bed in a room downstairs, you'll have the pleasure of going out for a nice evening without venturing far from your temporary home. See p. 95. At the **Hotel Bijou** (111 Mason St.; **800/771-1022** or 415/771-1200) a tiny in-house movie theater shows a nightly double billing of filmed-in–San Francisco movies, so you can round out your day of sightseeing with a low-key evening activity. See p. 80. If you want to do something silly with the kids, take them to the Tonga Room at the **Fairmont Hotel** (950 Mason St.; ✆ **800/441-1414** or 415/772-5000) for appetizers and a mild tropical storm. See p. 94.
- **Best Lobby:** If the kids are into fairy tales, the **Fairmont Hotel** (950 Mason St.; ✆ **800/441-1414** or 415/772-5000) will leave them waiting for Princess Aurora to arrive. See p. 94. A close contender is the **Palace Hotel** (2 New Montgomery St., at Market St.; ✆ **415/546-5089**); the ceiling of its historic Garden Court consists of 80,000 panes of glass. See p. 86. For the most stunning lobby in town, the truly opulent, yet tasteful, Art D eco–inspired **Four Seasons** (757 Market St.; ✆ **415/633-3000**) tops the list. See p. 86.
- **Best If You Have a Car:** For stays around Union Square, the **Galleria Park Hotel** (191 Sutter St.; ✆ **800/792-9639** or 415/781-3060) is built over a parking garage, so it won't take long to retrieve yours. Like all downtown hotels, parking charges are nuts—$30 per day is average—so it's not economical to park here, just convenient. See p. 72. One car per room gets free indoor parking at the **Cow Hollow Motor Inn & Suites** (2190 Lombard St.; ✆ **415/921-5800**). See p. 97. A spot for your car also comes courtesy of the **Hotel Del Sol** (3100 Webster St.; ✆ **877/433-5765** or 415/921-5520; p. 97) or the **Marina Motel** (2576 Lombard St.; ✆ **800/346-6118** or 415/921-9406; p. 98).
- **Best If You Brought the Dog:** The **Hotel Monaco** (501 Geary St.; ✆ **800/214-4220** or 415/292-0100) has packages for pooches that rival anything other hotels have for kids. I don't know if there's an underlying message there.

See p. 73. A sister property, the **Serrano Hotel** (405 Taylor St.; ✆ **866/289-6561** or 415/885-2500), will walk your dog by appointment and stocks gourmet pet food, treats, and comfy bedding. See p. 76. The **Hotel Vitale** (8 Mission St.; ✆ **888/890-8688** or 415/278-3700; p. 92) and the **St. Regis** (125 3rd St.; ✆ **415/284-4000;** p. 87) also welcome pets, and the **Larkspur Hotel** (524 Sutter St.; ✆ **800/919-9779** or 415/421-2865; p. 81) keeps a bowl of dog treats in the lobby.

- **Best for Walkers:** Steps from Chinatown and the Financial District, and still close to Union Square, the **Hotel Triton** (342 Grant Ave.; ✆ **800/800-1299** or 415/394-0500) is terrific for anyone who wants to get up and explore downtown. See p. 73. If you prefer to stroll along the water, try the **Hotel Vitale** (8 Mission St.; ✆ **888/890-8688** or 415/278-3700; p. 92) or the **Harbor Court Hotel** (165 Steuart St.; ✆ **866/792-8263** or 415/882-1330; p. 93), both of which are across the street from the Embarcadero promenade, one of the best places in the city for a stroll. The **Argonaut Hotel** (495 Jefferson St.; ✆ **866/415-0704** or 415/563-0800) is next to one of the loveliest walking paths in town, which starts at Aquatic Park, runs through woodsy Fort Mason, and takes you along the scenic Marina waterfront. See p. 89.
- **Most Environmental:** The **Orchard Garden Hotel** (466 Bush St.; ✆ **888/717-2881** or 415/399-9807) is the first California Hotel to be certified for eco-friendly new construction by the U.S. Green Building Council. See p. 75. Its sister property, the **Orchard Hotel** (665 Bush St.; ✆ **888/717-2881** or 415/362-8878), is also an environmentally friendly option. See p. 75.
- **Best Views:** Most of the guest rooms at the **Hotel Vitale** (8 Mission St.; ✆ **888/890-8688** or 415/278-3700) look out onto the bay, while the "Circular" suites offer nearly 180 degrees of windows. See p. 92. Most of the hotels atop Nob Hill offer fine vistas, but the **Mark Hopkins InterContinental** (1 Nob Hill; ✆ **800/662-6455** or 415/392-3434) gets the top honors in this category. See p. 95.
- **Best Hotel Food:** The **Grand Cafe** and **Petit Cafe** in the **Hotel Monaco** (501 Geary St.; ✆ **800/214-4220** or 415/292-0100) provide first-class dining just an elevator ride away. See p. 73. **Cortez** in the **Hotel Adagio** (550 Geary Blvd.; ✆ **800/228-8830** or 415/775-5000) offers excellent cuisine, but while the evening *tapas* menu may be too sophisticated and pricey for a family meal, breakfasts are a well executed. See p. 79. **Ponzu** in the **Serrano Hotel** (405 Taylor St.; ✆ **866/289-6561** or 415/885-2500) has a great menu of pan-Asian cuisine. See p. 76. The best hotel restaurant for kids has to be **Puccini & Pinetti,** where kids can design their own pizzas. It's next to the **Hotel AbRi** (127 Ellis St.; ✆ **866/778-6169** or 415/392-8800). See p. 79. **The Dining Room at the Ritz-Carlton** (600 Stockton St.; ✆ **800/241-3333** or 415/296-7465) is one of the most highly rated restaurants in town. See p. 96.
- **If Price Is No Object:** For extreme luxury and pampering, top honors go to the **St. Regis** (125 3rd St.; ✆ **415/284-4000**). See p. 87. The **Four Seasons** (757 Market St.; ✆ **415/633-3000**) is a close second. See p. 86. If you prefer more traditional opulence, the **Ritz-Carlton** (600 Stockton St.; ✆ **800/241-3333** or 415/296-7465) provides a sumptuous hotel experience. See p. 96.
- **If Price Is the Deal Breaker:** The most charming budget option near Union Square is the **Golden Gate Hotel** (775 Bush St.; ✆ **800/835-1118** or 415/392-3702). Rooms are small but clean and

bright, and breakfast is part of the package. See p. 81. If you are planning to stay for a few days, the **Halcyon Hotel** (649 Jones St.; ✆ **800/627-2396** or 415/929-8033) offers safe, comfortable rooms with money-saving kitchenettes. See p. 82. For a family of three willing to share showers and store stuff in lockers, a private room at **Hostelling International San Francisco, Fisherman's Wharf** (Fort Mason, Building 240; ✆ **415/771-7277**) can be had for as little as $60, and comes with a bay view, continental breakfast, use of a kitchen, and free parking. Rates for a family of four start at $80. See p. 82. My advice is to get away from the tourist zones altogether and book a room at **Hotel Tomo** (1800 Sutter St.; ✆ **877/738-7477** or 415/921-4000), the newest, brightest accommodation you can get for not a lot of money. See p. 99.

- **Best for Baby:** Call the **Four Seasons** (757 Market St.; ✆ **415/633-3000**) and tell them you're arriving with a baby. They'll set you up with a fully outfitted crib, a diaper storage unit, diapers, wipes, baby shampoo, baby lotion, and so on. See p. 86. **The Laurel Inn** (444 Presidio Ave.; ✆ **800/552-8735** or 415/567-8467) is another top pick for travelers with babies or toddlers, not just for the kitchenettes but also for the neighborhood, which is teeming with families. See p. 100.
- **Best for Toddlers:** When you've got a 2- or 3-year-old in tow, nothing comes in handier than a nearby park. You'll find a small one across the street from **The Huntington Hotel** (1075 California St.; ✆ **800/227-4683** or 415/474-5400). Also, if you snag one of the Huntington's rooms with a full kitchen, you'll be all set when the little tyke wakes up at 5am demanding breakfast. See p. 95. The **Marina Motel** (2576 Lombard St.; ✆ **800/346-6118** or 415/921-9406) is close to two great playgrounds: Moscone and Cow Hollow. Even if you can't snag a unit with a kitchen, all rooms have refrigerators. See p. 98. If you'll be racing back to the hotel for your toddler's nap every afternoon, the **Serrano Hotel** (405 Taylor St.; ✆ **866/289-6561** or 415/885-2500), conveniently located near Union Square, is a good choice. It also keeps complimentary cribs, strollers, and booster seats on hand. See p. 76.
- **Best for Teens:** The **Hotel Triton** (342 Grant Ave.; ✆ **800/800-1299** or 415/394-0500) will wake up the most disaffected teenager with rock 'n' roll in the lobby and a design palette that has "groovy" written all over it. Rooms are small so you won't be sharing, but that's good for the kid who needs some space. See p. 73. The **W Hotel** lobby and bar (181 3rd St.; ✆ **888/625-5140** or 415/777-5300) is a whirlwind of activity that can be fascinating for teens. The clientele considers itself pretty hip. The location, across from Yerba Buena Center, means instant recreation for the kids at the Metreon. See p. 88.
- **Best for Large Families:** The **Hyatt at Fisherman's Wharf** (555 N. Point St.; ✆ **800/223-1234** or 415/563-1234) can set you up in connecting double/doubles and on request will provide a fridge. Even better, coin-op washers and dryers are on every floor, which, if you can get the kids to do a load, will make your return home calmer. See p. 90. The absolute best hotel for big or extended families is **The Laurel Inn** (444 Presidio Ave.; ✆ **800/552-8735** or 415/567-8467), because you can request interconnecting rooms with two double beds and one of the kitchenette units, creating your own custom suite. See p. 100.
- **Best for Long Stays:** Around the Marina, the **Cow Hollow Motor Inn & Suites** (2190 Lombard St.; ✆ **415/921-5800**) provides apartment-style

Fun Facts San Francisco Firsts

1847 *The California Star*, a four-page weekly, becomes the first newspaper published in San Francisco.

1848 The first public school in California opens in San Francisco.

1852 The first legal execution in San Francisco takes place on Russian Hill.

1860 The first Pony Express rider begins a trip from Missouri to San Francisco. The 2,000-mile journey takes 10 days.

1880 The world's first motion picture premiers at the San Francisco Art Association Hall.

1888 The poem "Casey at the Bat" by Ernest L. Thayer is published for the first time in the *San Francisco Examiner* newspaper.

1911 The San Francisco Symphony plays its first season.

1912 Women in San Francisco vote for the first time.

1937 Harold Wobber becomes the first person to commit suicide by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge.

1944 San Francisco Ballet produces the first full-length dance production of *The Nutcracker* in the United States.

1952 The Bay Area Educational Television company is founded, eventually becoming KQED, one of the first public broadcasting companies in America.

1964 The Condor Club in North Beach becomes the country's first topless dance bar.

1965 The band formerly known as The Warlocks plays for the first time as The Grateful Dead at San Francisco's Fillmore Auditorium.

1977 Harvey Milk is elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, becoming the first openly gay man to be elected to major public office in the United States.

suites with full kitchens and discounts for stays longer than 5 days. See p. 97. The kitchen units at the **Marina Motel** (2576 Lombard St.; ✆ **800/346-6118** or 415/921-9406) are available to those staying 7 nights or more. See p. 98.

The **Halcyon Hotel** (649 Jones St.; ✆ **800/627-2396** or 415/929-8033) also offers bare-boned, but inexpensive, rooms with kitchenettes designed for guests staying for a week at a time. See p. 82.

3 THE BEST DINING BETS

- **Best Burger:** At $7 for a cheeseburger, the burgers at **Burger Joint** (700 Haight St.; ✆ **415/864-3833** and 807 Valencia St.; ✆ **415/824-3494**) don't come cheap. Considering they're made with only the finest ingredients, including naturally raised Niman Ranch beef, they're worth every penny. See p. 142.

Taylor's Refresher (1 Ferry Bldg.; ✆ **866/328-3663**) comes in a close second, with burgers made from all-natural, local beef, topped with a tasty "secret sauce" and garnished with lettuce and tomatoes fresh from the Farmer's Market. See p. 125.

- **Best Milkshake:** It's close, but I'm giving this one to **Taylor's Refresher.** Both it and **Burger Joint** (see "Best Burger," above) use San Francisco's luscious Double Rainbow ice cream for their first-rate strawberry, vanilla, and chocolate shakes. But in the summer Taylor's branches out with a to-die-for blueberry shake. See p. 125 and p. 142.
- **Best for Breakfast:** For its inventive omelets, terrific pancakes, and freshbaked breads, **Ella's** (500 Presidio Ave.; ✆ **415/441-5669**) takes the prize in the early meal category. See p. 139. Of course, while in San Francisco, you could always branch out and have dim sum for breakfast (see "Best Dim Sum," below), which I highly recommend.
- **Best Children's Menu:** Kids aren't limited to chicken fingers and fries at friendly **Puccini & Pinetti** (129 Ellis St.; ✆ **415/392-5500**). The children's menu includes a salad, fruit, soup, and spaghetti, along with the irresistible make-your-own-pizza option. See p. 108.
- **Best Decor:** Step into **Ana Mandara** (891 Beach St.; ✆ **415/771-6800**) and step into Vietnam—complete with tropical foliage, a facade of a Vietnamese home, and Indochinese artifacts. See p. 129.
- **Best Views:** Perched atop a bluff over the open ocean, the **Cliff House Bistro** (1090 Point Lobos Ave.; ✆ **415/386-3330**) affords a vista that will take your breath away. See p. 149. If you can't make it out to the Sunset District, try **McCormick & Kuleto's** (900 North Point St.; ✆ **415/929-1730**) in Ghirardelli Square for a view of the San Francisco Bay, Alcatraz Island, and the historic ships of the Hyde Street Pier. See p. 130.
- **Best If You Have a Sitter: Fleur de Lys** (777 Sutter St.; ✆ **415/673-7779;** p. 107) is one of the best, and most romantic, restaurants in the state. **Delfina** (3621 18th St.; ✆ **415/552-4055**) offers consistently good Italian food in a lively, hip setting; after dinner, you'll be steps away from the bars and nightlife of the Mission District.
- **Best for a Nice Dinner with Older Kids: A16** (2355 Chestnut St.; ✆ **415/771-2216**) has terrific wood-fired pizzas and an enticing Italian menu, but the hopping vibe will be best appreciated by older kids. See p. 134. Another great spot to take older children is **Town Hall** (342 Howard St.; ✆ **415/908-3900**). They'll appreciate the inventive all-American menu and the sophisticated, but lively, dining scene. See p. 113.
- **Best for a Nice Dinner with the Grandparents:** We regularly take grandparents to **Antica Trattoria** (2400 Polk St.; ✆ **415/928-5797**). The uncomplicated Tuscan cuisine is top quality, and the elegant, but unpretentious, ambience is perfect for relaxed dinner conversation. Another place many older patrons appreciate is **McCormick & Kuleto's** (900 North Point St.; ✆ **415/929-1730**), with its well-prepared classic dishes and stellar view. See p. 140 and p. 130.
- **Best for Big Groups:** If the whole family is in town, head on over to **Kokkari Estiatorio** (200 Jackson St.; ✆ **415/981-0983**). The spacious dining room in back can fit even the largest parties, and private dining rooms are also a possibility. The delightful Greek menu includes appetizers that are perfect for sharing and main courses to please every taste. See p. 121.
- **Best Pizza:** For Neapolitan wood-oven-fired pizza that tastes good even

without cheese, you can't beat **A16** (2355 Chestnut St.; ✆ **415/771-2216**). See p. 134. The thin-crust pizzas at **Pizzeria Delfina** (3611 18th St.; ✆ **415/437-6800**) include six mouth-watering standards and two tempting daily specials—all worth ordering. See p. 146. For a true-blue slice of American-style cheesy pizza that kids love, **ZA Pizza** (1919 Hyde St.; ✆ **415/771-3100**) takes the cake—or, pie, as it were. See p. 141.

- **Best Barbecue:** No whining and no deconstructing the barbecue sauce: you're not in Kansas City, Dorothy. In San Francisco, we think **Memphis Minnie's** (576 Haight St.; ✆ **415/864-7675**) does a fine job of smoking brisket and ribs. The slaw is good, too. See p. 144.
- **Best Vegetarian:** You can't beat **Greens** (Building A, Fort Mason; ✆ **415/771-6222**) for excellent meatless cuisine—not to mention a lovely, airy dining room and fabulous views. See p. 133. Greens offers vegan dishes as well, but for those wishing to avoid any animal products whatsoever, **Millennium** (580 Geary St.; ✆ **415/345-3900**) is the choice. See p. 108. If that's not earthy enough for you, try the all-raw menu at **Café Gratitude** (1336 9th Ave.; ✆ **415/683-1346**).
- **Best Bakery: Tartine** (600 Guerrero St.; ✆ **415/487-2600**) actually has to advertise when its bread comes out of the oven (after 4pm, by the way). Otherwise, folks would be hanging around all day to get a loaf of walnut bread, which sells out immediately. See p. 148.
- **Best Cafe:** Not that kids really dig hanging out at cafes, but our kids (and plenty of other customers' kids) love the croissants at **Boulange de Polk** (2310 Polk St.; ✆ **415/345-1107**). They munch happily while parents sip cafe au lait and people watch from the sidewalk tables. See p. 140.
- **Best Chinese in Chinatown:** The **R&G Lounge** gets my nod because of its authentic and refreshingly different menu (631 Kearny St.; ✆ **415/982-7877**). See p. 120.
- **Best Chinese Not in Chinatown:** In offering an out-of-Chinatown choice, I'm going to make a plug for **Dragon Well** (2142 Chestnut St.; ✆ **415/474-6888**), which offers Chinese food that has been "California-ized," with an emphasis on very fresh, high-quality ingredients and a lot less grease. See p. 136.
- **Best Dim Sum:** San Franciscans seem to be equally divided as to where to get the best dim sum. Many insist it's to be found at **Ton Kiang** in the Richmond District (5821 Geary Blvd.; ✆ **415/387-8273**). See p. 152. If you just can't head out that way during your stay, rest assured. It's a bit more expensive than Ton Kiang, but I'm also a big fan of **Yank Sing** (101 Spear St., in the Rincon Center; ✆ **415/957-9300**). See p. 124. To help familiarize your kids with dim sum, check out the box "Kids' Guide to Dim Sum," below.
- **Best Thai:** By far our favorite is **Osha Thai Restaurant** (2033 Union St., ✆ **415/567-6742**). Just thinking about their *pad see ew* noodles makes my mouth water. See p. 137.
- **Best Ethnic Restaurant for Kids:** If the arched ceilings, hand-painted Arabesque plates, and delectable Moroccan menu at **Aziza** (5800 Geary Blvd.; ✆ **415/752-2222**) aren't exotic enough, head into the back room, which is full of North African–styled sofas and cushions. Better yet, wait until 7pm on weekends, when the belly dancer arrives. See p. 149.
- **Best Italian:** For a terrific family meal, **Trattoria Contadina** (1800 Mason St.; ✆ **415/982-5728**) offers hearty pastas and a friendly ma-and-pa atmosphere. See p. 127. For truly exceptional Italian

Kids' Guide to Dim Sum

For some reason, the whole communal aspect of dim sum seems to make my kids more adventurous. Waiters come with plates of food and everyone seated decides whether or not to go for it. When a plate is placed in the middle of the table, you're all in on the fun of trying it together. Of course, it helps that we've figured out what we think our kids will like and have learned to avoid anything that could truly shock them. I'm passing this knowledge on to you with a list of dim sum that most first-timers will definitely enjoy. And if you see fresh-steamed asparagus, snow pea shoots, or any other vegetables being offered, order them as well. They are all excellent.

- ***Har gau:*** Shrimp dumplings encased in a translucent wrapper and steamed
- ***Siu mai:*** Rectangles of pork and shrimp in a sheer noodle wrapper
- ***Gau choi gau:*** Chives, alone or with shrimp or scallops
- ***Jun jui kau:*** Rice pearl balls with seasoned ground pork and rice
- ***Law mai gai:*** Sticky rice with bits of meat and mushrooms wrapped in a lotus leaf
- ***Char siu bau:*** Steamed pork buns—bits of barbecued meat in a dough y roll
- ***Guk char siu ban:*** Baked pork buns—bits of barbecued meat in a glazed roll
- ***Chun guen:*** Spring rolls—smaller, less crowded versions of egg rolls
- ***Gau ji:*** Pot stickers—a thick, crescent-shaped dough filled with ground pork

cuisine, you can do no better than **Antica Trattoria** (2400 Polk St.; ✆ **415/928-5797**). See p. 140.

- **Best Fish:** At **Great Eastern** (649 Jackson St.; ✆ **415/986-2500**) your dinner gets plucked from the fish tanks in the back of the dining room, so there's no question the fish is fresh. See p. 118. The longtime favorite of city hall movers and shakers, **Hayes Street Grill** (320 Hayes St.; ✆ **415/863-5545**) uses the Bay Area's finest purveyors of fish, meat, and produce and puts out bright, simple plates of recognizable food. See p. 132.
- **Best Mexican: Mamacita** (2317 Chestnut St.; ✆ **415/346-8494**) serves ultra-fresh, flavorful Mexican specialties and makes an excellent guacamole. See p. 135. For inexpensive Mexican food with a view, you could do no better than **Mijita** (One Ferry Building, No. 44; ✆ **415/399-0814;** p. 161), created by one of SF's most renowned chefs. See p. 125. For a humble but terrific burrito, head down to the Mission to **La Corneta Taqueria** (2731 Mission St.; ✆ **415/643-7001**). See p. 147.
- **Best Ice Cream:** And the winner is . . . **Mitchell's** (688 San Jose Ave.; ✆ **415/648-2300**) for creamy, luscious ice creams in flavors both exotic (baby coconut, sweet corn) and comforting (Mexican chocolate, vanilla). See p. 147.
- **Best Afternoon Tea:** Treat the kids to a special child-friendly tea menu at the **Fairmont Hotel's Laurel Court** (950 Mason St.; ✆ **415/772-5259**). See

p. 118. Closer in tone to an English village teashop is **Lovejoy's Tea Room** (1351 Church St.; ✆ **415/648-5895**), often filled with ladies having a tête-à-tête and little girls practicing to be big girls. See p. 148.

- **Best Outdoor Dining:** The very best outdoor dining area belongs to the **Park Chalet** (1000 Great Hwy.; ✆ **415/386-8439**), which opens onto an expansive garden at the western edge of Golden Gate Park. In fact, with glass walls and a glass ceiling, the whole restaurant feels like you're outdoors. See p. 150. A much smaller outdoor dining area next to a pleasant lawn can be found at **Town's End** (2 Townsend St.; ✆ **415/512-0749**). See p. 123.
- **Best Delivery:** For basic Italian at terrific prices delivered to your hotel or home, **Pasta Pomodoro** (1875 Union St. and other locations; ✆ **415/771-7900**) is a very good thing. Its salads and fresh vegetables really round out a meal. See p. 137.

2 Planning Your Trip to San Francisco

Planning a trip is half the fun. It's also critical, especially when you're dealing with a group whose members may all have different interests. Make the kids active participants in your upcoming adventure by talking through the activities you can all enjoy. This chapter provides updated information on those activities, with details on when to go and how to get there.

1 VISITOR INFORMATION

The San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau, 900 Market St. (at Powell St.), Hallidie Plaza, Lower Level, San Francisco, CA 94102 (✆ **415/391-2000;** www.onlyinsanfrancisco.com), is the best source of specialized information about the city. Even if you don't have a specific question, you might want to request the free Visitors Planning Guide and the San Francisco Visitors Kit. You can also check online for specific information and sign up for the bureau's monthly newsletter, which lists upcoming local events and special travel offers. If you need specific information faxed to you, you can call ✆ **800/220-5747;** follow the prompts to receive information by fax only. The bureau highlights only its members' establishments, so if it doesn't have what you're looking for, that doesn't necessarily mean it doesn't exist.

2 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

PASSPORTS

For information on how to get a passport, go to "**Passports**" in the "**Fast Facts**" section in the appendix at the end of this book—the websites listed provide downloadable passport applications as well as the current fees for processing passport applications. International visitors can obtain a visa application at the website of the U.S. State Department at **http://travel.state.gov**.

VISAS

For information on how to get a Visa, go to "**Visas**" in the "**Fast Facts**" section of the appendix.

The U.S. State Department has a **Visa Waiver Program** allowing citizens of the following countries (at press time) to enter the United States without a visa for stays of up to 90 days: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Citizens of these nations need only a valid passport and a round-trip air or cruise ticket upon arrival. If they first enter the United States, they may also visit Mexico, Canada, Bermuda, and/or

the Caribbean islands and return to the United States without a visa. Further information is available from any U.S. embassy or consulate. Canadian citizens may enter the United States without visas; they need only proof of residence.

Citizens of all other countries must have (1) a valid passport that expires at least 6 months later than the scheduled end of their visit to the United States, and (2) a tourist visa, which may be obtained without charge from any U.S. consulate.

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Unless you're arriving from an area known to be suffering from an epidemic (particularly cholera or yellow fever), inoculations or vaccinations are not required for entry into the United States. If you have a medical condition that requires **syringe-administered medications,** carry a valid signed prescription from your physician—the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) no longer allows airline passengers to pack syringes in their carry-on baggage without documented proof of medical need. If you have a disease that requires treatment with **narcotics,** you should also carry documented proof with you—smuggling narcotics aboard a plane is a serious offense that carries severe penalties in the U.S.

For **HIV-positive visitors,** requirements for entering the United States are somewhat vague and change frequently. For up-to-the-minute information, contact **AIDSinfo** (✆ **800/448-0440** or 301/519-6616 outside the U.S.; www.aidsinfo.nih.gov) or the **Gay Men's Health Crisis** (✆ **212/367-1000;** www.gmhc.org).

CUSTOMS

What You Can Bring Into San Francisco

Every visitor more than 21 years of age may bring in, free of duty, the following: (1) 1 liter of wine or hard liquor; (2) 200 cigarettes, 100 cigars (but not from Cuba), or 3 pounds of smoking tobacco; and (3) $100 worth of gifts. These exemptions are offered to travelers who spend at least 72 hours in the United States and who have not claimed them within the preceding 6 months. It is forbidden to bring into the country foodstuffs (particularly fruit, cooked meats, and canned goods) and plants (vegetables, seeds, tropical plants, and the like). Foreign tourists may carry in or out up to $10,000 in U.S. or foreign currency with no formalities; larger sums must be declared to U.S. Customs on entering or leaving, which includes filing form CM 4790. For details regarding U.S. Customs and Border Protection, consult your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, or **U.S. Customs** (✆ **877/227-5511** or 703/526-4200; www.cbp.gov).

What You Can Take Home from San Francisco

Canadian Citizens

For a clear summary of **Canadian** rules, write for the booklet *I Declare,* issued by the **Canada Border Services Agency** (✆ **800/461-9999** in Canada, or 204/983-3500; www.cbsa.gc.ca). Canada allows its citizens a C$750 exemption, and you're allowed to bring back duty-free 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, 1.14 liters of liquor or 1.5 liters of wine. In addition, you're allowed to mail gifts to Canada valued at less than C$60 a day, provided they're unsolicited and don't contain alcohol or tobacco (write on the package "Unsolicited gift, under $60 value"). All valuables should be declared on the Y-38 form before departure from Canada, including serial numbers of valuables you already own, such as expensive foreign cameras. Note: The $750 exemption can only be used once a year and only after an absence of 7 days.

U.K. Citizens

U.K. citizens returning from **a non-EU country** have a customs allowance of: 200 cigarettes; 50 cigars; 250 grams of smoking tobacco; 4 liters of still table wine; 1 liter of spirits or strong liqueurs (over 22%

volume); 2 liters of fortified wine, sparkling wine, or other liqueurs; and £300 of all other goods, including perfume and souvenirs. People under 17 cannot have the tobacco or alcohol allowance. For more information, contact HM Customs & Excise at ✆ **0845/010-9000** (from outside the U.K., 020/8929-0152), or consult their website at www.hmce.gov.uk.

Australian Citizens

The duty-free allowance in **Australia** is A$900 or, for those under 18, A$450. Citizens can bring in 250 cigarettes or 250 grams of loose tobacco, and 2.25 liters of alcohol. If you're returning with valuables you already own, such as foreign-made cameras, you should file form B263. A helpful brochure available from Australian consulates or Customs offices is *Know Before You Go.* For more information, call the **Australian Customs Service** at ✆ **1300/363-263,** or log on to www.customs.gov.au.

New Zealand Citizens

The duty-free allowance for **New Zealand** is NZ$700. Citizens over 17 can bring in 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, or 250 grams of tobacco (or a mixture of all 3 if their combined weight doesn't exceed 250g); plus 4.5 liters of wine and beer, or 1.125 liters of liquor. New Zealand currency does not carry import or export restrictions. Fill out a certificate of export, listing the valuables you are taking out of the country; that way, you can bring them back without paying duty. Most questions are answered in a free pamphlet available at New Zealand consulates and Customs offices: *New Zealand Customs Guide for Travellers, Notice no. 4.* For more information, contact **New Zealand Customs,** The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (✆ **04/473-6099** or 0800/428-786; www.customs.govt.nz).

3 WHEN TO GO

Because summer is when most kids have vacation, you may be planning to visit San Francisco sometime between **June and August.** Just be warned that the city is at its foggiest at that time. The good news is that most of California is very warm then—so if your trip includes other stops in the state, you may even welcome the city's brisk morning fog.

Expect crowds around Fisherman's Wharf and on the F-Market streetcars. Book Alcatraz Island tickets at least 1 week ahead of time and, after 9am, expect to wait in long lines to board the Powell Street cable cars. Fortunately, because San Francisco sees fewer conventions in the summer, you may actually get better hotel rates at the business-oriented hotels downtown (although not at Fisherman's Wharf).

The city puts on a show all summer and into fall, with music and dance festivals, street fairs, and special events. Yerba Buena Center, one of the best places for families, offers free world-class concerts in the gardens. It's also prime baseball season; if you're all fans, you'll be delighted to spend the afternoon at AT&T Park.

September and October are usually great months in San Francisco; the fog disappears and the air is warm. Of course, school schedules may be an issue, but perhaps you can fit in a long weekend in the city. Fall brings a huge spike in conventions, but business is normally conducted during the week, leaving hotels to offer weekend packages and discounts.

If you can handle the vagaries of the weather, **winter** is a terrific season to visit. You'll feel like you have the city to yourself

Tips Convention Info

The San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau publishes a summary list of major conventions and trade shows on its website, www.sfvisitor.org/convention. It's wise to check it out before you cement your travel dates, just to find out if you're likely to be competing with your orthodontist or attorney for a hotel room.

during weekdays when everyone else is at work. On the weekends, folks from the surrounding areas make their way into town for shopping and theater. San Francisco is a delight after Thanksgiving, as Union Square puts up a massive Christmas tree and surrounding stores dress themselves up in festive decorations. In November, Chinatown merchants hold a night market fair at Portsmouth Square on Saturdays until 11pm, and shoppers have a field day finishing up their holiday shopping.

In December, some hotels, such as the Ritz-Carlton, hold children's holiday teas, and an outdoor ice skating rink opens at the Embarcadero Center. The San Francisco Ballet dusts off *The Nutcracker* and the American Conservatory Theater gives Scrooge nightmares in its annual performances of *A Christmas Carol.* The air is crisp, the temperatures cool. You won't go home with a tan, but you can have quite a bit of fun.

Spring sees a full calendar of meetings at the Moscone Convention Center, but, as in the fall, hotel rooms become available for leisure travelers on the weekends. San Francisco weather is best in late spring, and Golden Gate Park is particularly beautiful at that time, with trees budding in the Strybing Arboretum and the cherry trees blossoming in the Japanese Tea Garden.

For up-to-the-minute weather reports, log onto www.sfgate.com/weather.

San Francisco's Average Temperatures (°F/°C) and Rainfall (in.)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp (°F)	58/46	61/49	62/49	65/50	65/51	68/53	68/54	69/56	71/56	70/55	64/51	59/47
Temp (°C)	14/8	16/9	17/9	18/10	18/11	20/12	20/12	21/13	22/13	21/13	18/11	15/8
Rainfall (in.)	4.7	4.2	3.4	1.3	.5	.13	.04	.3	11.2	3	3	3.2

KIDS' FAVORITE SAN FRANCISCO EVENTS

If you have any flexibility in scheduling your trip, some events, such as the Chinese New Year Parade, are so special that it might be worth tweaking your dates to fit them in. It's also fun to discover that an event or performance just happens to be slated during your visit. You can peruse a calendar of events published by the Convention and Visitors Bureau at www.onlyinsanfrancisco.com/calendar. In addition, you can subscribe to www.gocitykids.com, which offers a weekly e-mail calendar, and also has a calendar you can search by date, with information and phone numbers for all events listed.

Things change, so if your heart is set on participating in any events listed below, phone or check the sponsoring organization's website for dates and times.

JANUARY

Anniversary of the Sea Lions' Arrival at PIER 39. Sure, you can watch these pinnipeds loll around, sunbathe, and bark at one another most of the year, but January is the month they arrived at PIER 39. (They came for the herring in 1990.) Toward the middle of the

month, PIER 39 honors these mammoth mammals with a special party and guests from the Marine Mammal Center. Call ✆ **415/705-5500** or visit www.pier39.com.

February

Chinese New Year Festival and Parade is a memorable 2-week event culminating in the exciting, loud, and lengthy Chinese New Year's parade down Market Street to Columbus Avenue on the final Saturday evening. Spectators pack the sidewalks, so you'll want to find a good spot early on. Chinatown itself is filled with color and bustles even more than usual, with families buying food for holiday dinners and special red envelopes to fill with New Year's gifts of money for the kids. Call the Chinese Chamber of Commerce at ✆ **415/982-3071** or visit www.chineseparade.com. ***Note:*** Depending on the Chinese lunar calendar, this event sometimes occurs in early March.

Coinciding with Valentine's Day in mid-February, PIER 39 hosts **Tulipmania,** featuring more than 39,000 tulips throughout the pier. The amazing diversity in size, shape, and color is something to behold. Visitors are welcome to join complimentary landscaping tours each day at 10am. Call ✆ **415/705-5500** or visit www.pier39.com.

March

The **St. Patrick's Day Parade** that runs along Market Street to the Civic Center is always lively. There's a large expatriate Irish community in town, and Ireland's patron saint traditionally gets his due here. Call ✆ **415/675-9885** or visit www.uissf.org.

April

On Easter Sunday, the festive **Union Street Easter Parade & Spring Celebration,** between Gough and Fillmore streets, includes pony rides, a petting zoo, kids' rides and games, a climbing wall, a kids' activities area, costumed characters, and a parade. Phone ✆ **800/310-6563** or visit www.sresproductions.com/union_street_easter.html.

Japantown has held an annual **Cherry Blossom Festival** since 1967. The festival takes place over 2 weekends and offers many events for families, including demonstrations of traditional dance, *taiko* drumming, tea ceremonies, and flower arrangement. There's also a parade, copious food, and, of course, beautiful trees in bloom. Call ✆ **415/563-2313** or visit www.nccbf.org.

May

Cinco de Mayo (5th of May) is a major Mexican festival celebrating the Battle of Puebla against French occupation forces in 1862. A parade down Mission Street is followed by a festival at Civic Center Plaza with music, arts, crafts, low-rider cars, and delicious food that most kids will love. The parade is free; the festival has a small admission charge of around $5 for adults (free for kids under 12). Visit www.sfcincodemayo.com. This fiesta is more family-oriented than **Carnaval** (www.carnaval.com) later in the month, which is wilder and very crowded.

The **Youth Arts Festival** is a weeklong exhibition of the visual, performing, and literary arts by middle school and high school students throughout the city. The opening day of the festival, which takes place at Yerba Buena Center, is the most exciting, with activities and an awards presentation. Admission is free. Call ✆ **415/543-1718** or visit www.ybgf.org.

Bay to Breakers started after the 1906 earthquake as a way to boost the city's spirits and remains today the longest consecutively run footrace in the world. Although the event, held on the third Sunday in May, attracts top-level international athletes, what will interest your

kids are the thousands of participants donned in the wackiest outfits imaginable. Call ✆ **415/359-2800** or visit www.ingbaytobreakers.com.

June

Union Street Art Festival, usually held around the end of May or beginning of June, includes special children's art activities among all the food, wine, and crafts booths and music stages. This is a particularly crowded street fair and parking is next to impossible, so come by public transportation and foot. Call ✆ **800/310-6563** or visit www.unionstreetfestival.com.

The **Haight-Ashbury Street Fair** features tie-dye galore, food, entertainment, and the colorful presence of neighborhood characters. Admission is free. Call ✆ **415/863-3489** or visit www.haightashburystreetfair.org.

The **Ethnic Dance Festival** is usually held the last 3 weekends in June and takes place at the Palace of Fine Arts behind the Exploratorium. Music and dance groups from all over the world entertain. Tickets are $22 to $44. Call ✆ **415/474-3914** or visit www.ethnicdancefestival.org.

Stern Grove Midsummer Music Festival is one of the great free events of the summer. All sorts of performances—opera, Latin music, jazz—are held Sunday afternoons at 2pm in Sigmund Stern Grove at 19th Avenue and Sloat Boulevard. The venue is easily reached on M-Oceanview or K-Ingleside Muni streetcars or the 27-Monterey bus. Bring a picnic and a blanket. Call ✆ **415/252-6252** or visit www.sterngrove.org.

July

As the largest free jazz festival on the west coast, stretching over 8 blocks, the **Fillmore Street Jazz Festival** draws more than 90,000 visitors over the July 4 weekend. You can listen to music performed on several stages, view art and crafts on display, and taste from all over the world. Call ✆ **800/731-0003** or visit www.fillmorestreetjazzfestival.com.

On the **Fourth of July** itself, the Waterfront Festival takes place around PIER 39 and at Ghirardelli Square and culminates in a fireworks show beginning at 9pm. Call ✆ **415/705-5500** or visit www.pier39.com.

August

Nihonmachi Street Fair, a celebration of the Bay Area's diverse Asian and Pacific American communities, occurs on 1 Saturday and Sunday each August in Japantown, on Post Street between Laguna and Fillmore streets. Asian-American artisans show their creations, and the "Food Fest" features the cooking of Asia and the Pacific Islands. A children's area includes games and the opportunity to learn traditional arts and crafts. Call ✆ **415/771-9861** or visit www.nihonmachistreetfair.org.

September

Ghirardelli Square Chocolate Festival is an annual benefit for Open Hand, a worthy local charity that delivers food to homebound AIDS patients. Chocoholics wander from one tasting to another, provided by local shops and restaurants. Serious eaters can enter the sundae-eating contest. The prize is the winner's weight in chocolate! Call ✆ **415/775-5500** or visit www.ghirardellisq.com.

San Francisco Blues Festival is a fun weekend at Fort Mason. The festival is complete with food and a few booths with T-shirts and CDs, but the draw is the excellent roster of local and national blues musicians and the setting. For information and tickets call ✆ **415/979-5588** or visit www.sfblues.com.

Sandcastle Classic, an annual fundraiser for Leap, an artists-in-residence program, turns Ocean Beach into a fantastical canvas for sand castles, pyramids,

wild animals, and flights of fancy. It usually takes place at the end of the month, but sometimes occurs in October. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. Call ✆ **415/512-1899** or visit www.leap4kids.org.

October

San Francisco Comedy Day Celebration at Golden Gate Park's Sharon Meadow brings together at least 30 comedians for a Sunday afternoon full of laughter. Call ✆ **415/820-1570** or visit www.comedyday.com.

Fleet Week, the second weekend of October, honors the armed forces and usually brings the Blue Angels to our skies. Plenty of other astonishing aerial acrobatics, the kind that elicit gasps from the crowd, are also on display. PIER 39 presents music and additional fleet week activities. Victoria Park is a prime viewing area, with food stands and a big screen set up for ultra close-up shots. For a detailed listing of events, call ✆ **650/599-5057** or see www.fleetweek.us.

San Francisco Italian Heritage Parade celebrates Christopher Columbus's contribution to our fair land with a 12:30pm parade beginning at Jefferson and Stockton streets and ending at Washington Square, where the festivities continue. Visit www.sfcolumbusday.org.

Halloween almost seems like an official city holiday in San Francisco. The **Randall Museum Family Halloween Fest** is a daytime event on the Saturday before Halloween for 2- to 12-year-olds. Pumpkin carving, entertainment, and crafts are among the day's offerings at this local treasure. Costumes are most appropriate. Call ✆ **415/554-9600** or visit www.randallmuseum.org. Down at Yerba Buena Gardens, little ones will be pleased with the **Gardens Halloween Costume Walk,** wherein costumed kiddos collect goodies while it's still daylight. This takes place the Sunday before Halloween. Call ✆ **415/543-1718** or visit www.ybgf.org.

November

The **Embarcadero Center Lighting Ceremony and Celebration** on the Friday before Thanksgiving is fun if you can get close enough to watch the performances in the ice skating rink. If you can't make it for the building lighting (the four towers gleam during the holiday season), the rink is open for public skating until after the New Year. Skates, for feet of all sizes, may be rented at the ticket booth.

Ritz-Carlton Teddy Bear Teas for children always sell out, especially if you can only attend on a weekend. The holiday teas start after Thanksgiving, but you can make reservations beginning in August; call ✆ **415/773-6198.**

December

Christmas at Sea, especially suited to children under 10, takes place on board the historic ships docked at the Hyde Street Pier (p. 170), and offers singing, cider, and stories. Call ✆ **415/561-6662** or visit www.maritime.org.

4 GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND

GETTING THERE

By Plane

The two major airports closest to San Francisco are **San Francisco International (SFO),** which is 14 miles south of downtown, and **Oakland International Airport (OAK),** across the Bay Bridge off Interstate 880. SFO is closer, and more airlines fly into this major hub. Oakland is

Tips Kids with Colds

It's even more difficult for kids to make their ears pop during takeoff and landing than it is for adults. The Eustachian tube is especially narrow in children, and the passage is even tighter when mucous membranes are swollen. This can make ascent and descent especially painful—even dangerous—for a child with congested sinuses. If your little one is suffering from a cold or the flu, it's best to keep him grounded until he recuperates, if that's an option. If you simply must travel with your child as scheduled, give him an oral child's decongestant an hour before ascent and descent or administer a spray decongestant before and during takeoff and landing.

smaller and easier to navigate, but fares for cabs and shuttle buses into the city are about 50% higher.

It's worth checking your options flying into either airport, as you'll sometimes find a cheaper or more convenient flight arriving in Oakland. The Oakland airport also often enjoys better weather than San Francisco, where flights can be delayed due to foggy conditions or be relegated to circling the skies while waiting for an available runway. The great news at SFO is the beautiful new International Terminal and the BART extension.

Airlines that fly into the Bay Area include **Air Canada** (✆ 888/247-2262; www.aircanada.ca), **Alaska** (✆ 800/252-7522; www.alaskaair.com), **American** (✆ 800/433-7300; www.aa.com), **British Airways** (✆ 800/247-9297; www.ba.com), **Continental** (✆ 800/525-0280; www.continental.com), **Delta** (✆ 800/221-1212; www.delta.com), **JetBlue** (✆ 800/538-2583; www.jetblue.com), **Northwest** (✆ 800/225-2525; www.nwa.com), **Southwest** (✆ 800/435-9792; www.southwest.com), **United** (✆ 800/241-6522; www.ual.com), and **US Airways** (✆ 800/428-4322; www.usairways.com).

Getting Through the Airport

With the federalization of airport security, security procedures at U.S. airports are more stable and consistent than ever. Generally, you'll be fine if you arrive at the airport **1 hour** before a domestic flight and **2 hours** before an international flight; if you show up late, tell an airline employee and she'll probably whisk you to the front of the line.

Bring a **current, government-issued photo ID** such as a driver's license or passport. Keep your ID at the ready to show at check-in, the security checkpoint, and sometimes even the gate. Children under 18 do not need government-issued photo IDs for domestic flights, but they do for international flights to most countries.

The TSA has phased out **gate check-in** at all U.S. airports. Passengers with e-tickets can still beat the ticket-counter lines by using **airport electronic kiosks** or **online check-in** from your home computer. Ask your airline which alternatives are available, and if you're using a kiosk, bring the credit card you used to book the ticket or your frequent-flier card. If you're checking bags or looking to snag an exit-row seat, you will be able to do so using most airlines' kiosks; again, call your airline for up-to-date information. **Curbside check-in** is also a good way to avoid lines, although a few airlines still ban curbside check-in; call before you go.

Security checkpoint lines are getting shorter, but some doozies remain. If you have trouble standing for long periods of

time, tell an airline employee; the airline will provide a wheelchair. Speed up security by **not wearing metal objects** such as big belt buckles. If you've got metallic body parts, a note from your doctor can prevent a long chat with the security screeners. Keep in mind that only **ticketed passengers** are allowed past security.

Federalization has stabilized **what you can carry on** and **what you can't.** The general rule is that sharp things are out, nail clippers are okay, and food and beverages must be passed through the X-ray machine—but that security screeners can't make you drink from your coffee cup. Bring food in your carry-on rather than checking it, as explosive-detection machines used on checked luggage have been known to mistake food (especially chocolate, for some reason) for bombs. Travelers in the U.S. are allowed one carry-on bag, plus a "personal item" such as a purse, briefcase, or laptop bag. Carry-on hoarders can stuff all sorts of things into a laptop bag; as long as it has a laptop in it, it's still considered a personal item. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has issued a list of restricted items; check its website (**www.tsa.gov**) for details.

Airport screeners may decide that your checked luggage needs to be searched by hand. You can now purchase luggage locks that allow screeners to open and re-lock a checked bag if hand-searching is necessary. Look for Travel Sentry certified locks at luggage or travel shops and Brookstone stores (you can buy them online at www.brookstone.com). These locks, approved by the TSA, can be opened by luggage inspectors with a special code or key. For more information on the locks, visit www.travelsentry.org. If you use something other than TSA-approved locks, your lock will be cut off your suitcase if a TSA agent needs to hand-search your luggage.

Getting Into Town From the Airport

San Francisco International Airport (SFO)

SFO (www.flysfo.com) consists of four main terminals: North (Terminal 3), South (Terminal 1), Central (Terminal 2), and International. The baggage level of each terminal also houses an information booth. Bank of America operates a branch on the mezzanine level of the North terminal, and you can locate ATMs on the upper level of all terminals. The number for **general information** is ✆ **650/821-8211;** for **transit information** call ✆ **650/817-1717.** The traveler's information desk in each terminal can also give you information on how to get where you're going.

To access the Rental Car Center from the Airport terminals, take the AirTrain Blue Line, which operates daily 24 hours a day. AirTrain stations are located in all terminals, parking garages, the Rental Car Center, and SFO's BART station. If you need a car seat (required for children who weigh less than 60 lb.), inquire when you make your rental reservations. Once you have loaded up the vehicle, follow the airport signs to Highway 101 North to drive into San Francisco. Stay toward the left so that you don't end up on Interstate 280. If your destination is Union Square, Nob Hill, or SoMa, exit at 4th Street. Traffic is manageable until rush hour, from 3 to 7pm.

If you aren't driving, you can reach your destination by taxi, shuttle, and BART. **Taxis** pick up passengers at the center island outside the baggage claim level of the airport. The 14-mile drive to Union Square takes 20 to 30 minutes depending on the time of day and should cost around $35 plus tip.

Shuttle vans offer door-to-door service from the airport, but the driver may make up to three stops before reaching your hotel. Shuttles pick up passengers from the

Tips **Don't Stow It—Ship It**

Though pricey, it's sometimes worthwhile to travel luggage-free. Specialists in door-to-door luggage delivery include **Virtual Bellhop** (www.virtualbellhop.com), **Luggage Express** (www.usxpluggageexpress.com), and **Sports Express** (www.sportsexpress.com).

upper-level center islands; a uniformed guide will direct you to the appropriate van. Be prepared to wait from 10 to 20 minutes for the one heading in your direction. Look for exact shuttle fares posted throughout the airport—most are now charging around $13 per person, which may make a cab a better deal. **SuperShuttle** (✆ **800/258-3826;** www.supershuttle.com) is my favorite of the services, and you don't need advance reservations from the airport. (You do need reservations for a shuttle *to* the airport, however.)

After years of wrangling and millions of dollars in construction, the **Bay Area Rapid Transit** (BART; ✆ **510/464-6000;** www.bart.gov) extension to SFO is now operational. The airport's BART station is located in the International Terminal. The AirTrain connects passengers to all terminals, the BART rail station, and the Rental Car Center. The BART train, which departs from the international terminal, takes about 30 minutes to reach downtown San Francisco and costs $4.95, making it by far the most inexpensive way to reach the city. I'm a huge fan of mass transit and would encourage you to use BART, but I have one caveat: If you're traveling with lots of luggage and not enough hands to manage it, take a cab. Otherwise, you may end up at the Powell Street BART station facing a 10-minute walk to your hotel. (San Francisco doesn't have huge numbers of taxis on its streets like London or New York, so don't count on catching a cab.) If you're also dealing with tired children, the journey from BART to your lodgings isn't going to make a wonderful start to the vacation.

Oakland International Airport (OAK)

Oakland International (✆ **510/563-3300;** www.flyoakland.com) consists of two terminals, one of which (Terminal 2) is pretty much devoted to Southwest Airlines. Both terminals have ATMs and information booths. All the major **rental car companies** have counters inside the terminals as well. If you are driving into San Francisco, exit the airport on Hegenberger Road. Follow it north to Interstate 880 toward San Francisco. From there, follow the signs to Interstate 80 to San Francisco. When you reach the Bay Bridge, you'll stop at a toll booth and pay $3 to cross. On the other side, take the 5th Street exit to get to Union Square.

All ground transportation at the airport is on one level. **Bayporter Express** (✆ **877/467-1800;** www.bayporter.com) is the best choice for a shuttle. It picks up passengers from Terminal 1 at the center island and from Terminal 2 around the corner from baggage claim. The fare to San Francisco is $26 for one person, $38 for two in the same party, and $7 for kids under 12. You need to make reservations for the 45- to 90-minute drive. Cabs will run $40 or more depending on traffic and take 30 to 40 minutes.

BART is another option. You can catch the **AirBART shuttle** (✆ **510/465-2278**), which runs every 15 minutes in front of either terminal. The fare is $2 for adults and 50¢ for children for the 15-minute ride to the Oakland Coliseum BART station. From there, you'll transfer to a BART train into San Francisco; the fare is $3.15.

Purchase your tickets from well-marked kiosks inside the airport or at the BART station. If you're staying around Union Street, you'll probably want to get off at the Powell Street stop.

Flying with Kids

If you plan carefully, you can make it fun to fly with your kids.

- You'll save yourself a good bit of aggravation by **reserving a seat in the bulkhead row.** You'll have more legroom, your children will be able to spread out and play on the floor underfoot, and the airline might provide bassinets (ask in advance). You're also more likely to find sympathetic company in the bulkhead area, as other families with children tend to be seated there. The only drawback is that in the bulkhead row you can't always lift the armrest for little ones to rest their head on your lap.
- Be sure to **pack items for your kids in your carry-on luggage,** such as toys, books, pacifiers, and chewing gum, to help them relieve ear pressure buildup during ascent and descent.
- **Have a long talk with your children** before you depart for your trip. If they've never flown before, explain to them what to expect. If they're old enough, you may even want to describe how flight works and how air travel is even safer than riding in a car. Explain to your kids the importance of good behavior in the air—how their own safety can depend upon their being quiet and staying in their seats during the trip.
- **Pay extra careful attention to the safety instructions** before takeoff. Consult the safety chart behind the seat in front of you and show it to your children. Be sure you know how to operate the oxygen masks, as you will be expected to secure yours first and then help your children with theirs. Be especially mindful of the location of emergency exits. Before takeoff, plot out an evacuation strategy for you and your children.
- Ask the flight attendant **if the plane has any special safety equipment for children.** Make a member of the crew aware of any medical problems your children have that could manifest during flight.
- **Be sure you've slept sufficiently** for your trip. If you fall asleep in the air and your child manages to break away, there are all sorts of sharp objects that could cause injury. Especially during mealtimes, it's dangerous for a child to be crawling or walking around the cabin unaccompanied by an adult.
- **Be sure your child's seatbelt remains fastened properly** and try to reserve the seat closest to the aisle for yourself. This will make it harder for your children to wander off—in case, for instance, you're taking the redeye or a long flight and you do happen to nod off. You will also protect your child from jostling passersby and falling objects—in the rare but entirely possible instance that an overhead bin pops open.

  In the event of an accident, unrestrained children often don't make it—even when the parent does. Experience has shown that it's impossible for a parent to hold onto a child in the event of a crash, and children often die of impact injuries.

  For the same reason, sudden turbulence is also a danger to a child who is not buckled into his own seat belt or seat restraint. According to *Consumer Reports Travel Letter,* the most common flying injuries result when unanticipated turbulence strikes and hurtles passengers from their seats.
- **Try to sit near the lavatory,** though not so close that your children are jostled by the crowds that tend to gather there. Consolidate trips there as much as possible.

Child Seats: They're a Must

According to *Consumer Reports Travel Letter,* the National Transportation Safety Board says that, since 1991, the deaths of and injury of some children could have been prevented had the children been sitting in restraint systems during their flights. Even in the event of moderate turbulence, children sitting on a parent's lap can be thrust forward and injured. When you consider that a commercial aircraft hits a significant amount of turbulence at least once a day on average, you'd do well to think about investing a few hundred dollars for a safety seat.

The FAA recommends that children under 20 pounds ride in a rear-facing child-restraint system, and says children that weigh 20 to 40 pounds should sit in a forward-facing child-restraint system. Children over 40 pounds should sit in a regular seat and wear a seat belt.

All child seats manufactured after 1985 are certified for airline use, but make sure your chair will fit in an airline seat—it must be less than 16 inches wide. You may not use booster seats or seatless vests or harness systems. Safety seats must be placed in window seats—except in exit rows, where they are prohibited, so as not to block the passage of other travelers in the case of an emergency.

- Try to **accompany children to the lavatory.** They can be easily bumped and possibly injured as they make their way down tight aisles. It's especially dangerous for children to wander while flight attendants are blocking passage with their service carts. On crowded flights, the flight crew may need as much as an hour to serve dinner. It's wise to encourage your kids to use the restroom as you see the attendants preparing to serve.
- Be sure to **bring clean, self-containing compact toys.** Leave electronic games at home. They can interfere with the aircraft navigational system, and their noisiness, however lulling to children's ears, will surely not win the favor of your adult neighbors. Magnetic checker sets, on the other hand, are a perfect distraction, and small coloring books and crayons also work well, as do card games like Go Fish.
- Some airlines **serve children's meals first.** When you board, ask a flight attendant if this is possible, especially if your children are very young or seated toward the back of the plane. After all, if your kids have a happy flight experience, everyone else in the cabin is more likely to as well.
- You'll certainly be grateful to yourself for packing **tidy snacks** like rolled dried fruit, which are much less sticky and wet, and more compact and packable, than actual fruit. Healthy granola bars are also a good alternative to crumbly cookies. Gingersnaps, crisp and not as crumbly as softer cookies, will also help curb mild cases of motion sickness. And don't forget to stash a few resealable plastic bags in your purse. They'll prove invaluable for storing everything from half-eaten crackers and fruit to checker pieces and matchbox cars.

By Car

You can get to San Francisco along three major highways. Interstate 5 runs through the center of the state and intersects with Interstate 580, which leads to Interstate 80 to the Bay Bridge. The drive from Los Angeles to San Francisco on I-5 is about 6 hours, and there aren't many places to stop for food, so plan accordingly. Highway 101 is the other major roadway from Southern California, and it's the route to use for reaching Marin County, Napa, and Sonoma, and other points north. The drive from Los Angeles to San Francisco on 101 takes 7 hours if you don't stop along the way. If you are taking a leisurely drive through California, Highway 1, which runs along the coast, is the most scenic route and takes you by Santa Cruz and Monterey, both fun cities for kids. The trip takes at least 8 hours.

Approach the city with patience if you have decided to motor here. The freeways seem to become more crowded every day, and afternoon rush hour on the Bay Bridge is a misnomer: no one rushes anywhere. Traffic on the Golden Gate Bridge on the weekends is also pretty dreadful. Make sure the kids have plenty of things to do in the car—portable cassette or CD players with books on tape and music are nearly as important as a spare tire.

Drivers arriving from the east will cross the Bay Bridge ($4 toll) and head toward downtown on 5th Street or toward North Beach and Fisherman's Wharf on Fremont Street. Cars coming from the south on Highway 101 will see the city skyline on their left a few miles past Monster Park (the former Candlestick Park). Downtown exits here are either 7th or 4th streets. If you're driving from the coast heading south, you'll enter San Francisco by the Golden Gate Bridge. Once you pass the tollbooth ($6 toll unless three or more of you drive through on a weekday between 4 and 6pm; at that time it's free for carpoolers), exit along the bay to Van Ness Avenue.

By Train

Amtrak (✆ **800/872-7245** or 800/USA-RAIL; www.amtrak.com) doesn't stop in San Francisco proper but lands in Emeryville or Oakland (depending on the point of origin), both in the East Bay. From Emeryville, an Amtrak bus takes passengers into downtown San Francisco, stopping at the Ferry Building, Fisherman's Wharf, Union Square, and the Caltrain station. From Oakland, the Amtrak bus takes passengers to the Financial District.

GETTING AROUND

By Public Transportation

San Francisco's Municipal Railway, known simply as "Muni" (✆ **311** from within San Francisco or **415/701-2311** from other locations), operates the city's buses, streetcars, and cable cars. For detailed route information, call Muni or visit its website at www.sfmuni.com. Another helpful website is http://transit.511.org, which also lists schedules and route maps.

City Buses & Streetcars

Muni streetcars run underground exclusively from Van Ness Avenue to the Embarcadero and mostly aboveground in the outlying neighborhoods, from 6am until 1am. Five lines (J, K, L, M, and N) make identical stops below Market Street, including Van Ness Avenue, Civic Center, Powell and Montgomery streets, and the Embarcadero. Past Van Ness Avenue the routes veer in different directions. The N-Judah services the Haight-Ashbury area and parallels Golden Gate Park on its way down Judah Street to the ocean. At the Embarcadero, this line also travels to AT&T Park by way of King Street near the Cal Train station. The J-Church line passes near Mission Dolores and the Castro on its way to Noe Valley and points south. The L-Taraval travels through the Sunset District within walking distance of the San Francisco Zoo.

Value Public Transportation

Muni passports can be a bargain for visitors who plan to take buses, streetcars, or cable cars often. A 1-day passport is $11; a 3-day passport is $18; and a 7-day passport is $24. (Using the passport for the CultureBus requires an additional $3). Kid and senior passports don't exist, but Muni sells monthly Youth (5–17 years old) and senior (65+) passes for $10. Passports and $3 Muni maps (a necessary item) can be purchased at the Visitor Information Center on Hallidie Plaza; at Tix Bay Area on Union Square; at the baggage level information booths at SFO; at the cable car ticket booths at Powell and Market streets, Hyde and Beach streets, and Bay and Taylor streets; and at several drugstores throughout the city. Passes and passports can be found at the cable car ticket booths at Powell and Market or Beach and Hyde streets. Single-day passports are available on board the cable cars as well. For other outlets, check Muni's website at **www.sfmuni.com**.

Dedicated tourists should consider investing in **Citypass,** which includes a 7-day Muni passport and tickets to several attractions—all at a significant discount. You'll get admission to the California Academy of Sciences, a Blue & Gold Bay Cruise, Aquarium by the Bay, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Exploratorium. Instead of the Exploratorium, you can opt to visit the de Young Museum or the Legion of Honor (or both, if you see them on the same day). If you can manage to visit all of the above, the Citypass price of $59 for adults and $44 for kids age 5 to 17 is very attractive. They can be purchased at the participating attractions, at the Visitor Information Center at Halladie Plaza, or online at **www.citypass.com**.

The F-Market line was started up in 2000 and equipped with a collection of carefully restored vintage streetcars from around the United States and Europe. These charming old-timers run from the Castro all the way along Market Street to the Embarcadero and Fisherman's Wharf. A popular method to reach the Ferry building and the piers, these cars are packed during summer and on weekends.

Muni buses, many of which are connected to an overhead electrical system, run from 6am until midnight. Bus stops are indicated by street corner signs and yellow bands painted on utility poles and curbs. Muni has 80 lines, so you can probably get to where you'd like to go . . . eventually. This isn't exactly rapid transit.

Fares on buses and streetcars are $1.50 for adults and 50¢ for children 5 to 17, seniors 65 and over, and disabled individuals. Kids under 5 ride free. Exact change is required. When you enter the front door and drop your fare into the fare box, the driver will hand you a paper transfer, valid for up to 90 minutes of rides in any direction. Turnstiles inside the underground Muni stations accept only coins; change machines are located on the walls next to the BART ticket dispensers. ***Note:*** Fares are higher for cable cars, the CultureBus (p. 177) and travel to Monster Park.

There is no simple way to handle strollers on either buses or streetcars, although, with the exception of the F-Market cars, streetcars are more spacious. If you are

traveling with a baby, an easy-to-fold umbrella stroller will be the most practical piece of equipment. If you can manage with a baby front pack or backpack, you'll be even better off. Toddlers are another issue. Since you really will need a stroller at some point during a walk, you'll have to practice releasing the closure and folding the stroller while holding the child at the same time. This is even more fun if you have more than one small child to deal with.

Cable Cars

No visit to San Francisco would be complete without a ride on one of the cable cars. Three cable car routes traverse the downtown area. The most scenic is the Powell-Hyde line, starting off at Powell and Market and ending at the turnaround by Ghirardelli Square. Next is the Powell-Mason line, which also begins at Powell and Market and then meanders through North Beach, ending on the east side of Fisherman's Wharf. The third is the California Street line that leaves from Market and California, crests at Nob Hill, and ends abruptly at Van Ness Avenue. The queues to board the Powell Street cars at the turnarounds, at either end, can be daunting; but if you don't board there, you may not get on. Tickets are $5 one-way (free for kids under 5 and only $1 before 7am and after 9pm), making those Muni passes look even better.

Cable cars run from 6am to 1:30am. To avoid standing in line, plan on traveling during off-peak hours. A great idea is to wake the family early and ride the cable car to a breakfast spot. Or take the cable car back to your hotel after dinner. Alternatively, you could head for the California Street cars, which are less popular because the route isn't as exciting, although the hill is quite steep. For more about the cable cars, see chapter 6.

BART

Please note: **Bay Area Rapid Transit** (BART; ✆ **415/989-2278**) is not Muni. Both systems share the same underground stations downtown, but the similarities end there. BART tickets are not valid on Muni and vice versa. The only Muni pass usable on BART is an adult $45 monthly Fast Pass, and only at certain BART stations. The sleek silver-and-blue BART trains travel along the Market Street corridor, then make stops on Mission Street (16th and 24th sts.), in Glen Park, and south in Colma and the San Francisco International Airport. Other lines head to Berkeley, Oakland, and other East Bay cities. Purchase BART tickets from machines inside the stations. Fare to and from any point within San Francisco is $1.50; outside the city, fares range up to $5.65. For schedules and route information, call the number above or log on to the website **www.bart.gov**.

By Car

Driving in San Francisco can be frustrating, to say the least. If you are unfamiliar with the territory and your copilot has

Tips Feeding the Meters

Most city parking meters take nickels, dimes, and quarters, and have time limits of anywhere from 15 minutes to 4 hours. Meters that are green on top usually have 15- to 30-minute time limits. Even if you come back and put more quarters in the meter, overstaying the time limit can still be cause for a ticket. Check your tires to make sure a meter maid has not swiped them with chalk (usually in bright orange or blue)—they do so to see if your car has moved.

Great Garages

When you approach a garage, read the signs carefully. You may see a sign offering a cheap all-day rate. In fact, that rate may apply only to cars that arrive early in the morning. After that, rates can be as high as $4 every 15 minutes! Garages at places like PIER 39 may advertise free or discounted parking; but impossibly small writing underneath explains that validation from a store or restaurant is required. The best rates are at city-owned garages, many of which are listed here:

Union Square Garage, 333 Post St.; $3/first hour, $13/4 hours.

Sutter-Stockton Garage, 444 Stockton St. (Union Sq.); $2/first hour, $9/4 hours.

Ellis-O'Farrell Garage, 123 O'Farrell St. (Union Sq.); $2.50/first hour, $11.50/4 hours.

Fifth and Mission Garage, 833 Mission St. (SoMa); $3/first hour, $12/4 hours.

Portsmouth Square Garage, 733 Kearny St. at Clay (Chinatown); $2.50/first hour, $9/4 hours.

North Beach Garage, 735 Vallejo St. near Powell; $2.50/first hour, $9/4 hours.

issues reading maps, your vacation could turn chilly (or very, very loud) the moment you exit the motorway. Along with aggressive local drivers, one-way streets, no right/left turns when you really need one, and dead ends, there's a decided lack of parking and too many overanxious meter maids ready to pounce. Fortunately, it isn't necessary to drive to many of the places you'll want to go. When driving is imperative, you can easily rent a car for the day. For those of you who are arriving in the city by car, park at your hotel and do your best to use public transportation or walk.

Rental Cars

There's no reason to rent a car at the airport only to park it in San Francisco while you tour on foot or by Muni. With a reservation, you can pick up a rental car in the city on the day you'll be using it. Most rental car companies will be delighted to pick you up and drop you off right at your hotel if necessary, but many have offices near Union Square.

Companies that have offices downtown include **Avis,** 675 Post St. (✆ **415/885-5011;** www.avis.com); **Budget,** 5 Embarcadero Ctr. (✆ **415/433-3717;** www.budget.com); **Enterprise,** 222 Mason St. (✆ **415/837-1700;** www.enterprise.com); **Hertz,** 325 Mason St. (✆ **415/771-2200;** www.hertz.com); and **Thrifty,** 350 O'Farrell St. (✆ **415/788-8111;** www.thrifty.com).

Driving Rules

California law requires that both drivers and passengers wear seat belts. Cellphones must be hands-free while driving; use a headset, earphone, or speaker phone—or just pull over. Children up to age 6 or who weigh less than 60 pounds must use a car seat or booster seat. Cars may turn right on a red light (unless otherwise indicated) after making a complete stop and yielding to traffic and pedestrians. Also, make a complete stop at stop signs, not a rolling stop; our local traffic police love to write tickets for that seemingly innocuous offense. Cable cars and streetcars always

Tips San Francisco Parking Secrets

- Purchase a r oll of quar ters f or the met ers and keep them in the glo ve compartment so that y ou can take advantage of an y str eet spac es you're lucky enough t o enc ounter.
- Depending on ho w long y ou plan t o sta y in the cit y, y ou ma y want t o buy a $20 or $50 elec tronic car d that fits in nearly all SF park ing met ers. These can be pur chased at man y drugst ores, har dware st ores, some str eetcar sta- tions, and elsewher e. You can also buy them online at w ww.sfmta.com.
- Between 4 and 6pm, park ing is pr ohibited on major cr osstown r oads and pretty much an ywhere do wntown. Star t cruising the F inancial Distric t, Union S quare, Nob H ill, or S oMa about 10 minut es bef ore 6pm and get ready t o pounc e on the spac e of y our choic e.
- Take the first park ing spot that 's within walk ing distanc e of y our destina- tion. (And by walking distance I don't mean t wo doors do wn; I mean mor e like 4 blocks .)
- Street parking spaces are usually spoken f or before they ar e ac tually a vail- able. Watch for people walking toward cars with keys in hand and f or brake lights turning on. Wait for the spac e to open up and take it.
- Pay close att ention t o str eet sig ns. I n some neighborhoods , park ing f or non-residents (those without a cit y-issued sticker on their bumper) is lim- ited t o 1 or 2 hours .
- If park ing plac es suddenly seem widely a vailable, check the sig ns. I t ma y be str eet sw eeping time. M eter maids parade along the str eet writing $50 tickets just before the sweepers show up. Once the machines have rumbled by, y ou can saf ely park.
- Curb your car 's wheels when park ing on a hill: turn them t oward the curb when facing do wnhill and a way fr om the curb when park ing uphill . Although this w on't ac tually c ontribute t o y our finding a park ing plac e, it will help y ou r etain an y that y ou ha ve f ound. I t will also keep y ou fr om getting a ticket.
- Be g rateful f or park ing garages and use them. Cit y-owned garages ar e cheaper than privat ely o wned ones.
- Sometimes, the old park ing k arma just isn 't w orking. I f valet park ing is available, take it. I t's w orth it t o a void a headache .

have the right-of-way , as do pedestrians, whether or not they use intersections and crosswalks—although if they don't, they're at risk for a jaywalking ticket or worse. On Market S treet, one lane is ex clusively for buses. A void driving on M arket S treet anyway, because the way the lights ar e timed is infuriating, and y ou can't make a left turn anywhere.

Parking

Park in a city-o wned garage. They seem expensive, but not compar ed to the ticket you're going to get if y ou attempt to par k

on the street for any length of time. Legal street parking spaces do exist; they are next to unpainted curbs and usually are accompanied by meters. Yellow, white, green, and red curbs are all off limits; the exceptions are commercial zones (the yellow curbs), which are open to cars after delivery hours. Pay attention to the signs liberally posted on the streets. Be very aware of tow-away zones. You cannot park on most streets downtown between 4 and 6pm without running the risk of having your vehicle towed. And never park in front of a driveway. Otherwise, AutoReturn, an independent contractor for the City's towing services, may take your vehicle to its storage lot at 450 7th St., between Harrison & Folsom streets. If you return to your parking space but your car isn't there, check with AutoReturn online at www.autoreturn.com or call ✆ **415/553-1239** to see if it's been towed or merely stolen. It's likely been towed, and that means you get to visit City Tow to pay the fine and the storage charges. Such a misadventure will run you a minimum of $244 (most forms of payment accepted).

By Taxi

Hailing a cab on most city streets is a hit-or-miss proposition, but spotting a taxi downtown is easier, especially in front of hotels. When moving around with kids, it's probably best to phone (or have your hotel phone) a cab company because that's the only way to guarantee that you'll be retrieved. The major cab companies are **Desoto Cab** (✆ 415/970-1300), **Luxor Cabs** (✆ 415/282-4141), **Metro Cab** (✆ 415/920-0715), **Veteran's Cab** (✆ 415/552-1300), and **Yellow Cab** (✆ 415/626-2345).

Rates start at $3.10 when you enter a cab. After the first one-fifth of a mile, rates are 45¢ for each additional fifth of a mile as well as for each minute of waiting or traffic delay. If you take a cab from the airport to downtown, a $2 San Francisco Airport exit fee is added to the fare. The approximate fare from the airport is $30 to $45, depending on where you're staying. According to one of the companies I contacted, taxis are not required to provide infant or child car seats. If you hire a town car (for example, to bring you and your kids from the airport), they should be able to provide one, but be sure to ask when you make your reservation.

5 MONEY

Like any big city, San Francisco doesn't come cheap. Hotels, food, and admission fees at attractions add up. Fortunately, as I list in chapter 6, you can find plenty of great food at reasonable prices if you know where to look, which is usually not in the most touristy neighborhoods. Likewise, with careful planning, you may be able to score a good deal on a hotel room. Lastly, San Francisco is such a beautiful city that you can do a fair amount of satisfying sightseeing without spending much money at all.

LOWERING THE COST OF FAMILY TRAVEL

Traveling with kids can really add to the cost of a trip. Below are some ways to cut expenses.

- **Reserve a hotel room with a kitchenette.** There aren't a lot in San Francisco, but they do exist, and if you use them to prepare breakfast or even a bag lunch, you will save quite a bit. At a minimum, request a small fridge and coffeemaker, if your room doesn't already have one.

What Things Cost in San Francisco	US$	UK£
Taxi from airport to Union Square (excluding tip)	40	25
One-way adult Muni/bus fare to any city destination	1.50	1.10
One-way youth Muni/bus fare to any city destination	0.50	0.35
A 3-day adult Muni Passport (also good for cable car)	18	14
Regular movie at Metreon for two adults and two kids	38	29
IMAX tickets at Metreon for two adults and two kids	54	41
Alcatraz tickets for two adults and two kids aged 5–11	84	64
San Francisco Zoo tickets for two adults and two kids aged 4–14	48	36
Slice of pizza	3.50	2.65
Dim sum brunch for four at Ton Kiang	60	45
Package of 40 Huggies disposable diapers from Walgreen's	13	10
Cone at Mitchell's Ice Cream	2.65	1.95
A fresh orange juice at the Westin St. Francis Hotel	5.75	4.35
Four hours of parking in the Union Square Garage	13	10

- **Be adventurous diners.** The Mission, Chinatown, and the Richmond district have wonderful, inexpensive ethnic restaurants (Mexican, Chinese, Thai, and Middle Eastern, among others) that will expand your horizons without depleting your pocketbook.
- **Purchase a SF Municipal Railway (Muni) Passport** (see chapter 4). And, use buses and streetcars in lieu of renting a car or taking taxis.
- **Minimize the use of a car while in the city.** Parking is prohibitively expensive and frustrating. You'll not only save money, but you may have a more relaxed vacation.
- **Take advantage of what's free.** It may be difficult to schedule your trip around museums' free admission days, which are only once a month, but there are ways to spend a lovely day without constantly digging into your wallet. (See the box "Free (or Nearly Free) Things to Do with Your Kids in San Francisco," below.)
- **Remember your local memberships.** Zoos, aquariums, and museums offer free or reduced admission prices if you are a member of your local zoo, aquarium, and museum. For example, the San Francisco Zoo, the Aquarium of the Bay, and the California Academy of Sciences all have such reciprocal agreements. So bring your home city's membership cards with you.

ATMs

The easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM (automated teller machine), sometimes referred to as a "cash machine," or "cashpoint." The **Cirrus** (✆ **800/424-7787;** www.mastercard.com) and **PLUS** (✆ **800/843-7587;** www.visa.com) networks span the country; you can find them even in remote regions. The back of your bank card shows which network you're on; you can then call or check online for ATM locations in San Francisco. You must know your personal identification number (PIN) and daily withdrawal limit before you depart.

Note: Remember that many banks impose a fee every time you use a card at another bank's ATM, and that fee can be higher for international transactions (up to $5 or more) than for domestic ones (where they're rarely more than $3). In addition, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee. To compare banks' ATM fees within the U.S., use **www.bankrate.com**. For international withdrawal fees, ask your bank.

CREDIT CARDS & DEBIT CARDS

Credit cards are the most widely used form of payment in the United States. They also provide a convenient record of your expenses and generally offer relatively good exchange rates. You can also withdraw cash advances at banks or ATMs, provided you know your PIN.

Visitors from outside the U.S. should inquire whether their bank assesses a 1% to 3% fee on charges incurred abroad.

It's highly recommended that you travel with at least one major credit card. You need one to rent a car, and hotels and airlines usually require a credit card imprint as a deposit against expenses.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Traveler's checks are widely accepted in the U.S., but foreign visitors should make sure that they're denominated in U.S. dollars; foreign-currency checks are often difficult to exchange.

You can buy traveler's checks at most banks. Most are offered in denominations of $20, $50, $100, $500, and sometimes $1,000. Generally, you'll pay a service charge ranging from 1% to 4%.

The most popular traveler's checks are offered by **American Express** (✆ **800/221-7282** for cardholders—this number exempts Amex gold and platinum cardholders from the 1% fee.); **Visa** (✆ **800/732-1322**)—AAA members can obtain Visa checks for a $9.95 fee (for checks up to $1,500) at most AAA offices or by calling ✆ **866/339-3378;** and **MasterCard** (✆ **800/223-9920**).

If you do carry traveler's checks, keep a record of their serial numbers separate from your checks in the event that they are stolen or lost. You'll get a refund faster if you know the numbers.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR WALLET IS LOST OR STOLEN

Be sure to tell all of your credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two. Visa's U.S. emergency number is ✆ **800/847-2911** or 410/581-9994. American Express cardholders and traveler's check holders should call ✆ **800/221-7282.** MasterCard holders should call ✆ **800/307-7309** or 636/722-7111. For other credit cards, call the toll-free number directory at ✆ **800/555-1212.**

If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union** (✆ **800/325-6000;** www.westernunion.com).

Identity theft or fraud are potential complications of losing your wallet, especially if you've lost your driver's license along with your cash and credit cards. Notify the major credit-reporting bureaus immediately; placing a fraud alert on your records may protect you against liability for criminal activity. The three major U.S. credit-reporting agencies are **Equifax** (✆ **800/685-1111;** www.equifax.com),

Value Free (or Nearly Free) Things to Do with Your Kids in San Francisco

- Take a **City Guides walking tour** (p. 187) in an interesting neighborhood.
- Check out the **free outdoor concerts** and events at Yerba Buena Gardens Thursdays at noon and weekends between May and October.
- Take the kids to **Golden Gate Park's Koret Children's Quarter.**
- Take a free tour of the **Strybing Arboretum and Botanical Gardens** in Golden Gate Park (p. 176).
- Visit the **de Young Museum.** Take in the impressive architecture, check out the main lobby, savor the view from the museum tower, contemplate Ruth Asawa's ethereal sculptures inside, and stroll through the inspiring sculpture garden outside—all at no cost.
- Walk across the **Golden Gate Bridge.**
- Mosey through **Chinatown.** The sights and sounds of this colorful neighborhood are a cultural experience many people would pay to have.
- Visit the lovely **Hyde Street Pier** at no charge. Adults must pay $5 to board the ships, but kids are free. The nearby **National Maritime Visitors Center** is a hit with adults and kids, and it's free.
- Hang out at **Crissy Field.** Relish the priceless vista while your kids run around on the grassy hills or play at the beach.
- Ascend **Nob Hill.** Admire the stained glass at Grace Cathedral, regard the lobby of the Fairmont Hotel, and then take in the panoramic view from the top floor bar of the InterContinental Mark Hopkins Hotel.

Experian (✆ **888/397-3742;** www.experian.com), and **TransUnion** (✆ **800/680-7289;** www.transunion.com). Finally, if you've lost all forms of photo ID, call your airline and explain the situation; they might allow you to board the plane if you have a copy of your passport or birth certificate and a copy of the police report you've filed.

6 HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH

Before You Go

You needn't worry about keeping the kids, and yourselves, healthy in San Francisco. The water is fine to drink, the food is fresh, and no-smoking laws limit your exposure to irritants. The main word of caution is to bring warm clothes, even (or especially) during mid-summer, lest the fog and wind cause a family member to catch a cold. At the same time, don't forget the sunscreen. This is California, after all, and a day of mixed clouds and sunshine can still produce sunburn. Also, don't forget comfortable walking shoes, as there's a

- Visit the **California Palace of the Legion of Honor, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art,** or **de Young Museum,** all are free the first Tuesday of each month. The **California Academy of Sciences, Exploratorium,** and **San Francisco Zoo** are free the first Wednesday of each month, **and the Contemporary Jewish Museum** is free the first Monday of the month.
- Ride the Powell/Mason cable car to the **Cable Car Museum** (p. 178) for a close-up look at how the cars work.
- View displays of antique equipment, artifacts from the 1906 earthquake, and local firefighting memorabilia at the **San Francisco Fire Department Museum** (p. 182).
- Head to the **Main Library's children's wing** (p. 267) or bring your wee ones to **story hour** at most public library branches, held every day of the week except Sunday. For a schedule, check www.sfpl.org.
- Tour the city on a Muni bus (see "Getting Around," in chapter 4 for suggestions).
- Climb the **Filbert Steps,** the most famous of San Francisco's many staircases, offering lovely views and verdant gardens.
- Spend Saturday morning at the **Ferry Plaza Farmer's Market.** You could almost make a meal of all the fresh fruits, breads, spreads, and other food samples offered by the farmers, breeders, and bakers.
- Walk down the crooked part of **Lombard Street.**

good chance you'll be trekking up, and down, a few hills.

If you or your child suffer from a chronic illness, consult your doctor before your departure. For conditions like epilepsy, diabetes, or heart problems, wear a **MedicAlert identification tag** (✆ **888/633-4298;** www.medicalert.org), which will immediately alert doctors to your condition and give them access to your records through Medic Alert's 24-hour hotline.

Pack **prescription medications** in your carry-on luggage, and carry prescription medications in their original containers, with pharmacy labels—otherwise they won't make it through airport security. Also bring along copies of your prescriptions in case you lose your pills or run out. Don't forget an extra pair of contact lenses or prescription glasses.

What To Do If Someone in Your Family Gets Sick While Away From Home

Consult a pharmacist for minor health matters—your hotel can direct you to the closest drugstore. Walgreen's has three locations with 24-hour pharmacies: 3201 Divisadero St. at Lombard Street in the Marina District (✆ **415/931-6415**); 498 Castro St. at 18th Street in Noe Valley (✆ **415/861-6276**); and 1189 Potrero Ave. at 24th Street (✆ **415/647-0368**). If

your child has asthma or any medical condition that requires medication, and there's a chance you'll require extra inhalers, an EpiPen, or whatever, make sure you bring along a prescription from your pediatrician. If your child accidentally swallows something scary, call the State Poison Control hotline, available 24 hours a day, at ✆ **800/876-4766.** Along with important medications, pack an emergency pair of glasses or contact lenses. I list **hospitals** and **emergency numbers** in the "Fast Facts" section of chapter 4.

If you suffer from a chronic illness, consult your doctor before your departure. Pack **prescription medications** in your carry-on luggage, and carry them in their original containers, with pharmacy labels—otherwise they won't make it through airport security. Visitors from outside the U.S. should carry generic names of prescription drugs. For U.S. travelers, most reliable health-care plans provide coverage if you get sick away from home. Foreign visitors may have to pay medical costs upfront and be reimbursed later.

STAYING SAFE

The general caveats about not walking alone at night, staying in well-lighted areas, and carrying a minimum of cash and jewels on your person are as true in San Francisco as in every major city. Although San Francisco isn't crime-ridden, it is not a 24-hour town like New York, for example, and you could be putting yourself at risk venturing out at 2am. However, since this is a family travel book, let's assume your real worries have to do with keeping your children safe while on vacation.

First, give everyone in your party the hotel's business card upon arrival, and, if you have a cellphone, write that number on the back of the card. Make sure these stay in pockets or backpacks—preferably a front pocket, which is also the safest place for wallets. Never keep valuables in backpacks, as they can be easily and quickly yanked away. Tell your kids that if they turn around and don't see you standing next to them, they shouldn't panic. They may simply have gotten disoriented in the crowd, or you may have turned out of their line of sight. When this happens, they should call out your name—not simply "Mom" or "Dad"—in a clear, loud voice. The last thing you want them to do is wander off trying to find you. If you'll be traveling with teenagers who may want some space, and who don't have their own cellphones, consider short-range walkie-talkies. You most often see these on ski slopes, but they are ideal for families that need to keep in touch.

Discuss with your kids what to do if they get lost: you don't want them walking the streets looking for your hotel. If they don't immediately spot a police officer, they might ask the nearest hotel concierge, store clerk, or restaurant hostess to help—by calling the police or your hotel, for example. Take your child's age and level of common sense into consideration when you think about what he or she could do in the unlikely case that he or she becomes lost. Explain whom to avoid (for example, anyone holding a sign, talking to himself or herself, or begging with dogs and cats as props) and whom to approach for help.

Teenagers, who may be used to some freedom at home, are another matter. If they aren't familiar with busy urban centers and if they haven't already developed some street smarts, I'd think twice before allowing them to wander around alone even during the daytime. There are places where you can give them some space—Metreon (p. 162), the Westfield San Francisco Centre (p. 264), and AT&T Park (p. 265), for example—but it's preferable that they hang out with a companion.

The streets of San Francisco, like most big cities, are filled with drivers who are frustrated and/or talking on their cellphones, so be careful crossing them. This is not the city in which to play chicken with cars. Use the crosswalks, wait for the

lights, and check first to make sure some idiot isn't going to run the red light. Be especially careful with buses, particularly those making turns.

Children generally love riding on the streetcars and especially the cable cars. Inside the Muni/BART underground stations, keep yourself and your kids away from the edge of the platform. On cable cars, you are not allowed to hang body parts out the side, despite myriad photos showing people doing just that. It's an excellent way to get hurt the minute a truck or a bus passes by. Jumping on or off a moving cable car is equally dangerous.

Finally, we do have some dodgy neighborhoods you might consider avoiding. The Tenderloin (p. 53) isn't great, although it is home to a huge immigrant population that manages to live side by side with drug addicts, hookers, and vagrants. Evenings are particularly rough; daytime is okay. Parts of Van Ness Avenue, from Civic Center to Broadway Street, are grimy, and some medians are platforms for someone asking for money. Sixth and Seventh streets from Market Street east to Harrison Street are home to an assortment of folks that aren't making a go of it in mainstream society; this is an area to avoid anytime, day or night.

Like most of the world, San Francisco has long had its problems with residents who have drug and/or alcohol problems, who are mentally unstable, or who live on the edge for other reasons. If you are not panhandled at some point, at the very least your children will ask you what's going on with the crazy guy pushing a shopping cart down the street. You'll have to make your own choices about giving alms or not; but do be prepared for questions from your kids. Consider it a learning experience.

7 WORDS OF WISDOM & HELPFUL RESOURCES

FAMILY TRAVEL

My husband and I grew up moving from one country and city to another. Our wanderlust did not end when our children were born, and we have taken them with us to places near and far. Here are tips to consider when vacationing with kids:

- Family vacations are about spending time together and having fun. They should not be a marathon to cover as much territory as possible. Pick and choose what you're going to see and do so judiciously, keeping in mind that you won't see and do everything.
- Tired people, no matter their age, are difficult to deal with, so keep the pace slow, plan time to rest, and don't stay up too late at night.
- Hungry people can be worse than tired people, so start the day with a good breakfast, schedule time for lunch, and carry snacks with you.
- You may have arrived together, but you needn't travel in a pack. If it's possible to split up the kids among the adults to give everyone a break, do so—even if just for an hour. It can also be a nice opportunity to spend time alone with your child.
- Be flexible and maintain a sense of humor. If three cable cars packed to the rafters have passed you by, perhaps the fates are telling you to walk. (See "Getting Around" in chapter 4 for more advice.)
- Plan something for everyone in your itinerary. If you want to analyze modern art at the museum, that's okay. Just reward kids for their patience by spending the afternoon rowing boats on

Stow Lake or bowling at Yerba Buena Gardens.

- Ask your children what they would like to do during the trip. Give them options, make a calendar, and follow through on some of their suggestions. This doesn't mean they are in charge. It means they get to participate in a bit of decision-making.
- Give them a camera. Either buy an inexpensive digital camera for your kids, or let them use yours (carefully) once in a while. It's empowering and cheap—since you can just delete all the pictures with people's heads cut off—and provides a new way for your kids to think about sightseeing.
- Have them keep a journal. Even before they could write, we gave our girls notebooks so they could draw pictures of things they saw on each trip. Now, on vacations, they enjoy spending the few minutes before dinner arrives writing about their day.
- Look at the silver lining. Taking our toddler son back to hotels for naps in the middle of the day is my excuse for me to read a good book . . . or enjoy a nice nap myself, something that's rare at home.
- Relax. When you slow down, forget about stresses of home, and all focus on your new surroundings, you and your family can build some lasting memories together.

How to Take Great Trips with Your Kids (The Harvard Common Press) is full of good general advice that can apply to travel anywhere.

You can find good family-oriented vacation advice on the Internet from sites like **Family Travel Forum** (www.familytravelforum.com), a comprehensive site that offers customized trip planning; **Family Travel Network** (www.familytravelnetwork.com), an award-winning site that offers travel features, deals, and tips; **Traveling Internationally with Your Kids** (www.travelwithyourkids.com), a comprehensive site offering sound advice for long-distance and international travel with children; and **Family Travel Files** (www.thefamilytravelfiles.com), which offers an online magazine and a directory of off-the-beaten-path tours and tour operators for families.

ADVICE FOR SINGLE PARENTS

Parents traveling without partners will appreciate San Francisco's low-key, friendly disposition. Chances are hotel staff, restaurant employees, and people on the street will be happy to assist you in a pinch. It's good to keep a relaxed attitude when traveling with kids, but it's especially important when you're the one corralling the offspring. Go slowly and don't try to do too much; savor the break from the routine and the opportunity to be in a new setting together.

Online, the **Single Parent Travel Network** (www.singleparenttravel.net) offers excellent advice, travel specials, a bulletin board, and a free electronic newsletter. The **Family Travel Forum** (www.familytravelforum.com) also hosts a single parent travel bulletin board for tips from fellow travelers.

ADVICE FOR GRANDPARENTS

One reliable agency that targets traveling grandparents is **Elderhostel** (✆ **877/426-8056;** www.elderhostel.org), which arranges study programs for those aged 55 and over in the U.S. and in more than 80 countries around the world. Of particular interest are the "Intergenerational" programs. Most courses last 5 to 7 days in the U.S. (2–4 weeks abroad), and many include air fare, accommodations in university dormitories or modest inns, meals, and tuition.

Members of **AARP** (formerly known as the American Association of Retired

Persons), 601 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20049 (✆ **888/687-2277;** www.aarp.org), get discounts on hotels, air fares, and car rentals. AARP offers members a wide range of benefits, including *AARP The Magazine* and a monthly newsletter. Anyone over 50 can join.

The **U.S. National Park Service** offers a **Golden Age Passport** that gives seniors 62 years or older lifetime entrance to all properties administered by the National Park Service—national parks, monuments, historic sites, recreation areas, and national wildlife refuges—for a one-time processing fee of $10, which must be purchased in person at any NPS facility that charges an entrance fee. Besides free entry, a Golden Age Passport also offers a 50% discount on federal-use fees charged for such facilities as camping, swimming, parking, boat launching, and tours. For more information, go to www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm or call ✆ **888/467-2757.**

FOR GAY & LESBIAN PARENTS

San Francisco is well known as a bastion of gay and lesbian households, many of which include kids. If you hope to connect with any, start by contacting **Our Family Coalition** (✆ **415/981-1960;** www.ourfamily.org), a grass-roots organization for families with gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender members. Check their website for a calendar of social and educational events. You might also want to visit the **San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center** at 1800 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94102 (✆ **415/865-5555;** www.sfcenter.org). It's easily reached on the F-Market and J-Church streetcars. Other sites to check out include www.familypride.org, www.gayparentingpage.com, and www.rfamilyvacations.com.

Many agencies offer tours and travel itineraries specifically for gay and lesbian travelers. Among them are **Above and Beyond Tours** (✆ **800/397-2681;** www.abovebeyondtours.com); **Now, Voyager** (✆ **800/255-6951;** www.nowvoyager.com); and **Olivia Cruises & Resorts** (✆ **800/631-6277;** www.olivia.com).

Gay.com Travel (✆ **800/929-2268** or 415/644-8044; www.gay.com/travel or www.outandabout.com) is an online successor to the popular ***Out & About*** print magazine. It provides regularly updated information about gay-owned, gay-oriented, and gay-friendly lodging, dining, sightseeing, nightlife, and shopping establishments in every important destination worldwide.

The following travel guides are available at many bookstores, or you can order them from any online bookseller: ***Spartacus International Gay Guide*** (Bruno Gmünder Verlag; www.spartacusworld.com/gayguide) and ***Odysseus: The International Gay Travel Planner*** (Odysseus Enterprises Ltd.); and the ***Damron*** guides (www.damron.com), with separate, annual books for gay men and lesbians.

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Most disabilities shouldn't stop anyone from traveling in the U.S. There are more options and resources out there than ever before.

Most of San Francisco's major museums and tourist attractions have wheelchair ramps. Many hotels offer special accommodations and services for wheelchair users and other visitors with disabilities. Check with the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau (p. 16) for the most up-to-date accessibility information.

Many travel agencies offer customized tours and itineraries for travelers with disabilities. Among them are **Flying Wheels Travel** (✆ **877-451-5006** or ✆ 507/451-5005; www.flyingwheelstravel.com) and **Accessible Journeys** (✆ **800/846-4537** or 610/521-0339; www.disabilitytravel.com). **Avis Rent a Car** has an "Avis Access"

program that offers such services as a dedicated 24-hour toll-free number (✆ **888/879-4273**) for customers with special travel needs; special car features such as swivel seats, spinner knobs, and hand controls; and accessible bus service.

Organizations that offer assistance to disabled travelers include **MossRehab** (www.mossresourcenet.org), the **American Foundation for the Blind** (**AFB;** ✆ **800/232-5463;** www.afb.org), and **SATH** (**Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality;** ✆ **212/447-7284;** www.sath.org). **AirAmbulanceCard.com** is now partnered with SATH and allows you to preselect top-notch hospitals in case of an emergency.

Also check out the quarterly magazine ***Emerging Horizons*** (www.emerginghorizons.com); and ***Open World*** magazine, published by SATH.

TRAVELING WITH PETS

Fortunately, many San Francisco hotels accept pets, although in some cases these are limited to one cat or dog (and in, at least a few hotels, just dogs). With beautiful open spaces like Crissy Field and Golden Gate Park, you'll find plenty of places to take Fido. Just beware of San Francisco's leash laws: at some parks, you may notice all the dogs off-leash. Depending on where you are, that may be technically illegal and the moment you take off your dog's leash, an irate parent may let you know just where to put that leash.

8 STAYING CONNECTED

INTERNET ACCESS AWAY FROM HOME

Without Your Computer

It's hard nowadays to find a city that *doesn't* have a few cyber cafes. Although there's no definitive directory for cybercafes, two places to start looking are **www.cybercaptive.com** and **www.cybercafe.com**. San Francisco doesn't have many cybercafes, but most of its **public libraries** offer free Internet access. In addition, **FedEx Kinko's** and similar businesses offer Internet access for a fee. Avoid **hotel business centers** and **Internet kiosks,** such as in most major airports, unless you're willing to pay exorbitant rates.

With Your Own Computer

Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) is the buzzword in computer access, and more and more hotels, cafes, and retailers are signing on as wireless "hotspots" from where you can get high-speed connection without cable wires, networking hardware, or a phone line (see below). **T-Mobile Hotspot** (www.t-mobile.com/hotspot) services up wireless connections at more than 1,000 Starbucks coffee shops nationwide. **Boingo** (www.boingo.com) and **Wayport** (www.wayport.com) have set up networks in airports and high-class hotel lobbies. IPass providers (www.ipass.com) also give you access to a few hundred wireless hotel lobby setups. Best of all, you don't need to be staying at the Four Seasons to use the hotel's network; just set yourself up on a nice couch in the lobby. The companies' pricing policies can be byzantine, with a variety of monthly, per-connection, and per-minute plans, but in general you pay around $30 a month for limited access—and as more and more companies jump on the wireless bandwagon, prices are likely to get even more competitive.

Wi-Fi is available throughout San Francisco, and most of its hotels also offer dataports for laptop modems, and a few thousand hotels in the U.S. and Europe now offer free high-speed Internet access using an Ethernet network cable. (You can bring your own cables, but most hotels

Frommers.com: The Complete Travel Resource

For an excellent travel-planning resource, we highly recommend **Frommers.com** (www.frommers.com), voted Best Travel Site by *PC Magazine*. We're a little biased, of course, but we guarantee that you'll find the travel tips, reviews, monthly vacation giveaways, bookstore, and online-booking capabilities to be thoroughly indispensable. Special features include our popular **Destinations** section, where you can access expert travel tips, hotel and dining recommendations, and advice on the sights to see in more than 3,500 destinations around the globe; the **Frommers.com Newsletter,** with the latest deals, travel trends, and money-saving secrets; and our **Travel Talk** area featuring **Message Boards,** where Frommer's readers post queries and share advice, and where our authors sometimes show up to answer questions. Once you finish your research, the **Book a Trip** area can lead you to Frommer's preferred online partners' websites, where you can book your vacation at affordable prices.

rent them for around $10; call your hotel in advance to see what your options are.)

CELLPHONES

Just because your cellphone works at home doesn't mean it'll work elsewhere in the country (thanks to our nation's fragmented cellphone system). It's a good bet that your phone will work in major cities. But take a look at your wireless company's coverage map on its website before heading out—T-Mobile, Sprint, and Nextel are particularly weak in rural areas. If you need to stay in touch at a destination where you know your phone won't work, **rent** a phone that does from **InTouch USA** (✆ **800/872-7626;** www.intouchglobal.com) or a rental car location, but beware that you'll pay $1 a minute or more for airtime.

If you're not from the U.S., you'll be appalled at the poor reach of our **GSM (Global System for Mobiles) wireless network,** which is used by much of the rest of the world. Your phone will probably work in most major U.S. cities; it definitely won't work in many rural areas. And you may or may not be able to send SMS (text messaging) home. Assume nothing—call your wireless provider and get the full scoop.

In downtown San Francisco, **Triptel Mobile Rental Phones,** 1525 Van Ness Ave., between California and Pine streets (✆ **415/474-3330;** www.triptel.com), rents cellphones at $3 per day, or $15 per week. Airtime rates are 95¢ per minute for domestic calls, with an additional $1.25 per minute for international calls. Triptel also sells SIM cards for travelers bringing their own phones.

9 RECOMMENDED BOOKS, FILMS & MUSIC

As one of the most beautiful places on the planet, San Francisco has been a favorite of movie studios since the birth of film. In fact, the first public motion picture was presented in San Francisco—silhouettes of a horse, a dog, and a human gymnast were shown to viewers using a primitive projector made from a box with light, a lens, and a reflector. The following list of films and books will pique the interest of the most

recalcitrant traveler in the jewel of the left coast, although you probably won't find much resistance to begin with for this trip.

For younger children, rent the 1998 version of *The Parent Trap.* This remake, no longer starring Hayley Mills, darn it, has a fabulous scene at the famous Fairmont Hotel atop Nob Hill. Another classic is *Mrs. Doubtfire,* starring the city's own Robin Williams, who passes himself off as a British nanny in order to spend time with his children after separating from their mother, played by Sally Field. The family lives on Steiner Street, and there are several great shots of the city in the film. For older kids, there is an endless supply of great material, from *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home,* where the Enterprise and its crew set down in San Francisco to seek "nuclear wessels" across San Francisco Bay to *X-Men III: The Last Stand,* which includes a scene featuring Yerba Buena Gardens and Metreon. Reese Witherspoon's apartment in *Just Like Heaven* had San Francisco views, and Jennifer Lopez plays a San Francisco local in *The Wedding Planner.*

The zany Barbra Streisand and Ryan O'Neill screwball comedy *What's Up, Doc?* takes viewers down Lombard Street, through the Chinese New Year Parade, and down the Alta Plaza steps in Pacific Heights to the Bay. Another must-see film is *Foul Play* with Chevy Chase and Goldie Hawn racing frantically up and down just about every hill in the city in a quest to save the pope from being murdered at the Opera House. And who can resist the Dirty Harry movies, starring Clint Eastwood as the hard-boiled detective? Alfred Hitchcock also loved San Francisco and set three of his films here, including *Vertigo.*

Books are also useful to raise awareness of the city. For younger readers there are some great picture and storybooks available about San Francisco. Herb Caen, the city's famous columnist until his death in 1997, brought together some of its most famous characteristics—fog, cable cars, and Chinese New Year—in an enchanting tale, *The Cable Car and the Dragon* (Chronicle Books, 1986). *Humphrey, the Lost Whale: A True Story* (Heian, 1986), by Wendy Tokuda and Richard Hall, is a beautiful book available in English and Japanese. It tells the tale of a group of local people who band together to save a humpback whale that swims into San Francisco Bay by mistake. *The City by the Bay: A Magical Journey Around San Francisco* (Chronicle Books, 1993), by Tricia Brown and the Junior League of San Francisco, is a wonderful picture book that turns famous neighborhoods and landmarks into whimsical illustrations. This is perfect for introducing kids 4 to 8 years old to the culture and sights of the city. Another terrific book is a reprint of a 1962 classic by Miroslav Sasek, *This is San Francisco* (Universe Publishing, 2003). Even older kids will love the drawings of fishtailed Cadillacs and drive-in restaurants in this detail-rich picture book.

A novel set in the city can also act as a catalyst to interest older children. In *Peppermints in the Parlor* (Atheneum, 1980), by Barbara Brooks Wallace, recently orphaned Emily Luccock finds herself embroiled in a murder mystery in Golden Gate Park when she moves to San Francisco to live with her aunt and uncle. In Sid Fleischman's *By the Great Horn Spoon!* (Little Brown & Co., 1963), a 12-year-old boy strikes it rich in San Francisco during the gold rush after stowing away on a journey from Boston.

3 Suggested Itineraries

When you've got kids in tow, sometimes just getting out of your hotel in the morning can feel like a major accomplishment. Deciding where to go after that can seem more daunting still.

The itineraries in this chapter will help take the guesswork out of how to spend your time in San Francisco. I've included the major sights that will interest both adults and kids, and arranged them in a manner that takes advantage of San Francisco's relatively compact size, leading you from one nearby attraction to another.

If you have only 1 day to spend in San Francisco, the "Best in One Day" tour introduces you to the city's most enduringly popular highlights and gives you a chance to take in its beloved views as well. Should you have more time, take the "Best in Two Days" and "Best in Three Days" tours on days 2 and 3.

1 ORIENTATION

San Francisco has a lot going for it. For its geographic setting, it ranks as one of the loveliest cities on earth. The tolerant, open-minded population includes a dynamic mix of cultures from around the globe. The city produces some of the most innovative cuisine in the country and is home to a plethora of cultural institutions as well. Finally, from this little nook in Northern California, one can readily visit some of the most dramatic mountains, beautiful beaches, and stunning national parks in the world.

San Francisco occupies the northernmost tip of a 32-mile-long peninsula. Its western coast is battered by a chilly and unrelentingly forceful piece of the Pacific Ocean, while its eastern side looks out onto the calm waters of San Francisco Bay, the Bay Bridge, and the towns and mountains beyond. To the north, the photogenic Golden Gate Bridge spans the tiny opening to the bay, less than 2 miles in length, and connects San Francisco to the picturesque hills of Marin County. San Francisco has its own share of hills, and as such offers visitors one fabulous view after another.

The city's 790,000-plus residents include ethnicities from every corner of the globe. Enclaves of African-American, Chinese, El Salvadoran, Brazilian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Mexican, Middle Eastern, Russian, and Vietnamese residents, among others, make it possible for locals and visitors alike to experience a world of cultures within 47 square miles. San Francisco's cosmopolitan roots can be traced to the gold rush. Before then the sleepy town of Yerba Buena—settled by the Spanish in 1776, claimed by Mexico in 1822, and declared part of the U.S. (and renamed San Francisco) in 1848—was little more than a military outpost, a port, and some ranchland. That all changed when newspaper publisher Sam Brannan took it upon himself in 1849 to publicize the discovery of gold in the American River, 130 miles east.

The gold rush attracted a flood of fortune hunters, adventurers, savvy business folk, and opportunists from across America, as well as immigrants from as far away as China. The vast majority made no money digging for gold; their luck came from ending up in

San Francisco. Newcomers quickly created havens within the city to support and sustain their cultures. Neighborhoods emerged with predominant characteristics and, whether by foresight or fate, over the decades they have managed to maintain their individuality despite the forces of popular culture. San Franciscans, although there's no single accurate description of that species, believe in the virtues of diversity and self-expression. And that's another reason why, along with those hills and that view, you just have to love it here.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau operates the **Visitor Information Center** on the lower level of Hallidie Plaza on Powell and Market streets (✆ **415/391-2000;** www.onlyinsanfrancisco.com). The staff is multilingual and genuinely helpful. Visit the information center for books; maps; Municipal Railway passes for buses, streetcars, and cable cars; souvenirs; and tons of brochures to guide you further. It's open Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm and weekends 9am to 3pm.

Warning: Around Fisherman's Wharf and elsewhere, you may see manned booths with signs proclaiming themselves tourist information centers. These booths are operated by organizations such as the Fisherman's Wharf Merchants' Association or by tour companies, boat lines, or other attractions, and, as such, are not the best source of unbiased advice. For that, you should phone or visit the Visitor Information Center mentioned above.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The city is divided up into neighborhoods as diverse and interesting as their inhabitants. Streets, for the most part, are laid out in a traditional grid pattern, with two major exceptions: Market Street and Columbus Avenue. Market Street cuts through town from the Embarcadero up toward Twin Peaks in the Sunset District. Columbus Avenue runs at an angle through North Beach starting at the Transamerica Pyramid and ending near the Hyde Street Pier. Another important thoroughfare, Geary Boulevard, runs all the way from Market Street through town to Ocean Beach.

Even the traditionally laid out roads are confusing when a hill gets in the way and the street ends abruptly only to emerge on the other side, which is particularly annoying if you're driving. Travel with a map; I like the *San Francisco Transit Rider Map and Guide* (see "Maps" in the "Fast Facts" section of the appendix for details on finding one). Numbered *streets,* by the way, are downtown, south of Market Street. Numbered *avenues* (notice the subtle difference) are found in the Richmond and Sunset districts southwest of downtown.

NEIGHBORHOODS IN BRIEF

Union Square Named for the historic plaza it encompasses, Union Square is the cultural and commercial heart of San Francisco. This is where tourists, and plenty of residents, come to shop. The roughly 22 square blocks bordered by Market, Mason, Bush, and Kearny streets house San Francisco's greatest concentration of hotels in every rate category, clothing stores, galleries, and theaters. Equally plentiful in Union Square are restaurants, although they cater mainly to tourists and businesspeople. (With a few notable exceptions, San Francisco's better dining options, at

any price range, are located in other neighborhoods.)

You'll find no shortage of noise and congestion here, but green space is another matter. The actual Union Square plaza, located within Stockton, Powell, Geary, and Post streets, once provided the greenery that is otherwise absent in the city center, but a 2002 redesign of the plaza did away with a lot of it. At least the new design is better suited to hosting the square's frequent art exhibits and cultural events. Also on the plaza is the **TIX Bay Area half-price ticket booth** (see chapter 10 for more information on the TIX booth).

Despite Union Square's urban feel—there's not a playground to speak of—staying in this area is worth considering as it has the greatest concentration of hotels. Moreover, it's close to many other city attractions, with readily available public transportation. Finally, if your children are actually old enough to enjoy shopping as much as you do, this could be the neighborhood for you.

South of Market SoMa, as the blocks encompassed by Market, 10th, Steuart, and King streets (including South Beach and AT&T Park) are familiarly known, exemplifies the best and worst of urban life. Here you will find some of the city's top cultural institutions, such as the **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art** and the **Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.** With its lovely gardens, galleries, and performance space, and numerous attractions for children of all ages, the Yerba Buena Center is a testament to successful urban planning.

With the expansion of the **Westfield San Francisco Centre** mall and recent opening of a massive Bloomingdale's, whose doors open south to SoMa, the neighborhood has now integrated more fully into the Union Square shopping scene. In SoMa you'll also find the continuously expanding **Moscone Convention Center** and **Metreon,** with its own collection of kid-friendly attractions. Delightful bay views and **AT&T Park** are around the corner in nearby South Beach. Brand-new restaurants seem to pop up daily in this former industrial neighborhood. The **Museum of the African Diaspora** arrived a few years ago, and the **Contemporary Jewish Museum** now calls SoMa home.

But the ongoing development has not yet reached all of SoMa, and just 1 block west of the toniest shopping mall in town is the heart of skid row: 6th and 7th streets below Market Street. Market Street itself is also home to a share of the city's homeless residents. So although SoMa has some of the city's greatest cultural attractions and even a few of its best hotels, families with young children may prefer lodging in a less gritty part of town.

Chinatown It's with good reason that Chinatown is the second most visited destination in San Francisco, behind Fisherman's Wharf. The densely populated area between Broadway, Taylor, Bush, and Montgomery streets is every bit as colorful, crowded, and atmospheric as advertised. The much-photographed Dragon Gate entrance on Grant Street leads to one tourist shop after another, all visually enhanced by colorful banners in red, gold, and green.

If you're in the market for a rhinestone tiara or a set of chopsticks, this is nirvana. Kids love all the little knick-knacks: you could lose many hours poking around the stores, snacking on freshly baked fortune cookies, and wandering the alleyways. Stockton Street, with its exotic grocery stores and traditional herb shops, is equally alluring. Overall, Chinatown is great for shopping and eating, and several of its restaurants are listed in chapter 5. Given the noise and crowds,

however, it's not a great area for hotels, so stay elsewhere.

Fisherman's Wharf This is one of the country's most popular tourist attractions, just behind Disneyworld and Disneyland. Depending on where you are in Fisherman's Wharf, it can feel a lot like Disneyland as well. Stretching from Van Ness Avenue to Kearny Street, and from the piers to Bay Street, the wharf is home to **PIER 39,** a conglomeration of tacky tourist shops and overpriced restaurants. The pier certainly has a lot for kids to love, including an aquarium; a carousel; playful stores like Puppets on the Pier; an endless array of chocolate, ice cream, and cookie shops; and the noisy, smelly, but irresistible sea lions. Steps away from the pier, the cheesy attractions continue, with places like **Rainforest Cafe** offering lackluster food in a gimmicky environment.

Now that I've dampened your expectations, let me say that the western side of Fisherman's Wharf, opposite PIER 39, is actually quite nice, getting better every year, and worth a visit. Glimpses of the area's maritime past are visible in the wonderful antique boats of the **Hyde Street Pier.** Here you'll also find an upscale shopping mall at **Ghirardelli Square,** a pleasant stretch of lawn for kids to run around, a tiny beach, The Cannery courtyard, and the Municipal Pier, with its sweeping views of the Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge.

With all the tourists, it's no surprise most of the national chains have hotels here, many with pools. Unfortunately, except for the **Argonaut Hotel,** most of the area's lodging is not very inspiring—but it is all quite family-friendly.

North Beach Landfill came between the waves and North Beach more than 100 years ago, just one of many changes this historic neighborhood has experienced. Situated roughly from Broadway to Lombard and Grant to Taylor streets, it rubs shoulders with Telegraph Hill to the east and Russian Hill to the west. Columbus Avenue, the main artery, cuts through at an angle, brushing up against Washington Square Park, the village square. Once populated by the Italian immigrants from Genoa and Sicily who founded the area's fishing industry, North Beach is slowly giving way to Chinatown—at least on its southern edge, as Chinese shops creep up Stockton Street past Broadway.

There's still plenty of Mediterranean warmth, lots of pasta, and cafes galore. Although no good family accommodations exist in North Beach, it's a delightful spot to come to stroll, shop, and dine.

The Embarcadero If one can use the term "idyllic" to describe an urban amble, then a walk along the Embarcadero anywhere between Beach Street and AT&T Park certainly qualifies. Although the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake wreaked havoc on homes and lives throughout the Bay Area, one positive outcome was the release of the waterfront from the ugly shadow of the Embarcadero Freeway, which was damaged and subsequently demolished. The area's renewal has been astonishing and has added immeasurably to the beauty of the city. In the past few years, an extension to the Municipal Railway lines has brought streetcar service to the entire Embarcadero as far as Fisherman's Wharf.

Most recently, the 1896 **Ferry Building** at the foot of Market Street was completely rehabilitated. The attractive building now contains an array of gourmet food stores and excellent restaurants. Outside, you can browse the Ferry Plaza Farmer's Market twice a week; excursions to the Saturday market are a regular part of many a San Franciscan's schedule. Not far from the Ferry Building, the **Embarcadero**

Center, a set of five multi-use towers along Drumm Street beginning at Market Street, houses upscale chain stores, restaurants, a movieplex, and a seasonal outdoor ice skating rink.

The few hotels that grace the area are priced in the high-moderate to luxury range, but dining options run the gamut from very inexpensive to big-night-out. Just slightly off the beaten tourist path, this would be a fun, convenient area in which to stay with kids of any age.

Nob Hill Along California Street from Leavenworth to Stockton streets, Nob Hill is one of the oldest and most fashionable neighborhoods in town. It was once the exclusive turf of the railroad barons Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins, Charles Crocker, and Collis P. Huntington—collectively known as the "Big Four." The properties where their mansions once stood now support fancy hotels, a private club, expensive apartment buildings, and the striking Grace Cathedral. This is a wonderful place for families to stay: The largely residential feel of Huntington Park provides a nice respite from the congestion of the city center, yet it's just a 5-minute walk from Union Square. Also, the California cable car line runs right by most of the hotels. The downside for those on foot is a steep uphill walk from Union Square to get back to the hotel. There's also cost: Most of the hotels here are lovely, but also quite pricey.

Financial District Encompassing prime real estate roughly between Montgomery Street and the Embarcadero on the west side of Market Street, the Financial District is the business center of San Francisco. The once-controversial Transamerica Pyramid at Montgomery and Clay streets is a skyline landmark, worth a closer look for the miniature forest of redwood trees planted next to the building on the east side. Eating lunch around here is easy: Belden Place, an alley between Kearny, Bush, and Pine streets, offers outdoor dining in good weather and European ambience all year round, and the Crocker Galleria between Post, Sutter, and Montgomery streets offers good fast food, in addition to upscale shopping opportunities. You'll also find a growing collection of informal, organic, and healthy lunch spots geared to the working crowd.

Despite these perks, this wouldn't be my first choice of a neighborhood to stay in. The streets are practically deserted at night, except for homeless people. But, on the upside, it's really quiet.

Civic Center and Hayes Valley With the Asian Art Museum and impressive buildings in the Beaux Arts architectural style, Civic Center is a worthwhile stop for visitors. Bound by Golden Gate Avenue and Franklin, Hyde, and Market streets, this is home to City Hall; the opera, ballet, and symphony stages; the new main library; and the Civic Center Plaza. However, as a meeting ground for much of the city's homeless population, the neighborhood is less than ideal after dark. It's busy during the performing arts season, but even then, take a cab at night. The area has some hotels, but families should think twice before lodging around here.

Hayes Valley, west of Civic Center and tucked between Franklin, Webster, Grove, and Page streets, is dotted with hip boutiques featuring local designers, gift shops, and restaurants that leave you feeling like you've discovered something cool. As a transitional neighborhood, this isn't the safest place to stay, but it might be worth a trip during the day for some shopping.

The Marina and Cow Hollow Trendy single urbanites and young families call these picturesque neighborhoods home. The commercial blocks of the Marina

and Cow Hollow, Chestnut Street, and Union Street, are delightfully crammed with cafes, boutiques, and gift shops. Restaurants abound, some of them inexpensive, and most of them family-friendly.

In addition to the prime shopping, you'll find several choice attractions here, including the **Exploratorium** and the **Palace of Fine Arts,** the **Marina Green,** and **Fort Mason,** all of which have major kid appeal. It's also in close proximity to the **Golden Gate Bridge** and the **Presidio.** A fair number of travelers end up staying in the Marina, especially those attached to automobiles, because the parking is either free or at least reasonable. Most accommodations are in the motel range and line ever-busy Lombard Street, but there are some better-than-average places to sleep. Know where you're going if you venture out for the evening; sections of Lombard are dicey late at night.

The Presidio Founded in 1776 as a Spanish garrison, this northwest corner of San Francisco remained a military installation for more than 200 years. The U.S. took over in 1846 and later planted several pine and eucalyptus trees, eventually changing the sandy, barren hills into a delightful wooded area with more than 400,000 trees. In 1994, the army handed over control of all 1,500 acres to the National Park Service, to become part of the **Golden Gate National Recreation Area.** Today families come here to hike, play golf, sunbathe at Baker Beach, and even play a few frames at a little bowling alley. The old officer's club has a well-stocked visitor's center, and the old military PX market is now "Sports Basement," the cheapest place in town to buy sporting equipment.

My all-time favorite part of the Presidio is **Crissy Field,** which was reopened in 2002 as the Bay Area's newest national park. An easy walk along Crissy Walk takes you all the way to Fort Point, at the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge. The Presidio has no tourist accommodations, just plenty of things to do.

Japantown and the Western Addition Once upon a time, this neighborhood off Geary Boulevard, between Webster and Laguna streets, housed one of the largest concentrations of Japanese outside Japan. During World War II, when the city's Japanese residents were interred in camps, the area became home to other settlers, some of them African Americans who were recruited to California to work in the shipyards. Today, Japantown houses less than 4% of San Francisco's Japanese population. South of Geary Boulevard, which cut the neighborhood in two when it was widened in the '60s, the area is predominately African American and residential.

At first glance, Japantown appears to consist of a large pagoda and an unattractive indoor shopping center. Hidden inside these cement blocks, however, are good, inexpensive Japanese restaurants and some interesting shops. The Peace Plaza, with its flat, cement waterfall, is also a nice place for kids to stretch their legs. Japantown sponsors two festivals every year, the Cherry Blossom Festival in April and the Nihonmachi Street Fair in August (see chapter 2 for details on each).

Two hotels have opened here in recent years, which, since Japantown is off the beaten path, are a great value. With a slew of bus lines nearby, you can still get where you need to go—or just spring for a taxi with the money you've saved on the hotel room.

Alamo Square (btw. Hayes, Fulton, Steiner, and Scott sts.) fronts the group of restored Victorian homes known as "postcard row." The houses are so picture-perfect, they have become as much

Tips Getting to Golden Gate Park

When you study a map of the city, it appears as if it's an easy walk along Hayes, Oak, Fell, Page, or Haight streets from the Civic Center to Golden Gate Park. Appearances are deceiving. You'll encounter a number of hills along this route, which takes you through areas that are somewhat blighted, noisy with traffic, rough in spots, and unattractive. Save your legs for the park and get there on a bus or streetcar.

a symbol of San Francisco as the Golden Gate Bridge and the cable cars.

Pacific Heights The most expensive neighborhood in San Francisco is bordered by Broadway, Pine, Divisadero, and Franklin streets. Even the private schools here are housed in mansions. If you have an interest in architecture, you'll enjoy visiting the Haas-Lilienthal House, an 1886 Queen Anne Victorian decorated with period furniture at 2007 Franklin St. at Washington Street. Get the children to come along by promising a peek at Mrs. Doubtfire's fictional digs on 2640 Steiner Street at Broadway. Portions of *The Princess Diaries* were filmed at The Hamlin School, a private K–8 girls' school occupying a mansion on Broadway at Buchanan Street. Danielle Steel, the romance writer, lives in the 1913, 55-room Spreckles Mansion, which takes up all the space between Washington, Jackson, Gough, and Octavia streets, if you can imagine that. Directly in front of Ms. Steel's house is Lafayette Park, which has a small playground. An even better park is Alta Plaza at Steiner and Clay streets, with tennis courts and a newly refurbished playground that afford great city views.

Neighborhood residents do much of their shopping along Fillmore Street from California to Jackson streets, and there are some excellent restaurants here, too. It's a wonderful neighborhood in which to spend some time—too bad the cozy inns here are all geared toward couples.

Russian Hill Circled by Broadway, Polk, Chestnut, and Taylor streets, this hill was named for the Russian fur traders rumored to be buried here in the 1820s. The Polk Street section of the neighborhood has become Frenchified of late and sports some *très* chic antiques shops, cafes, and a brasserie. Hyde Street provides upside access to the wiggly part of Lombard Street (the Powell-Hyde cable car takes you right there), and Macondry Lane, immortalized in Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the City,* is tucked between Leavenworth and Taylor just north of Green Street. Your kids may be excited to know that the ice cream shop at the corner of Hyde and Union streets is the original Swensen's Creamery. It's a very residential area, with no real accommodations options.

Haight-Ashbury Bordered on the west by Golden Gate Park, on the north by Fulton Street, on the east by Divisadero Street, and by Waller Street to the south, gritty Haight-Ashbury has never fully put the 1960s behind it. This isn't a complete bummer, by any means; the main drag, Haight Street, is filled with vintage clothes—much of it on hangers and for sale—as well as independently owned stores that you won't see in your local indoor mall. The street is also action-packed, albeit with people looking for handouts, but it's historic, man.

As I recall from my own visits to San Francisco in bygone years, teens feel a magnetic pull to this place. If you have some with you, definitely have lunch here on your way to or from Golden Gate Park, but, because the area can be noisy, and a bit seedy at night, I wouldn't recommend overnighting here.

Laurel Heights and Presidio Heights In this small, upscale residential neighborhood centered around California Street between Presidio and Arguello streets, one could get the impression that a baby stroller is the price of admission. There are lots of them here, all filled with actual babies, and there are lots of stores catering to young families in the Laurel Village Shopping Center and on Sacramento Street just 1 block to the north. Come here to check out the delightful children's clothing stores, to do some grown-up shopping for home furnishings and fancy shoes, or to gawk at the large homes in Presidio Heights. Technically in the Presidio, but bordering Presidio Heights, is the Julius Kahn Park, with a fabulous playground and grassy fields. The one worthwhile family hotel here, the **Laurel Inn,** is great for families who want to stay in a "real" neighborhood.

The Mission District Stretching from 16th Street to Cesar Chavez Street, between Dolores Street and Potrero Avenue, the predominately Hispanic Mission District is lively, congested, and earthy. For tourists, Mission Dolores at 16th Street and lovely palm tree–lined Dolores Street are worth a visit if you're interested in historic San Francisco. **Dolores Park,** 2 blocks south, is a fine spot for views and a little Frisbee—but beware the unleashed dogs. The 24th Street corridor is a terrific market street for Latino food lovers, and Valencia and Guerrero streets between 16th and 23rd streets are brimming with hip little dining and drinking venues. The Mission has been redefining itself over the past 2 decades. It's the heart of the Latino community, a little bit funky, a little bit hipper than thou—and it's frankly unsafe on certain blocks. Don't linger around the BART stations on 16th or 24th streets and don't hang around late at night unless you're with people who know the area. Do come for dinner, but make sure to take a cab back to your hotel. (Parking is nearly impossible here, so driving isn't recommended anyway.) The **Precita Eyes Mural Art Center** offers guided tours of Mission District murals and high points—a great way to gain some insight into the community.

The Castro A huge rainbow flag, the symbol of gay activism, reigns over the center of this historic community where Market Street meets Castro Street. The flag is planted in Harvey Milk Plaza, named for the country's first openly gay man elected to public office, recently portrayed by the actor Sean Penn in the acclaimed film *Milk.* There aren't many family-friendly hotels here, but you'll find many fun, well-priced restaurants in the area. The Castro Theater is handsome to look at and fun to attend, particularly if you can catch one of the legendary sing-along screenings of the *Sound of Music.* Otherwise, there's not much for children around here.

Noe Valley In the late '80s, families began moving in droves into this hilly neighborhood south of the Castro, transforming petite Victorians into stylishly remodeled homes. You'll find a number of shops and cafes on 24th Street between Diamond and Church streets. The playground at Douglass and 27th streets, and the Walter Haas playground at Diamond Heights Boulevard and Addison Street, are both delightful. The neighborhood is otherwise pretty quiet.

The Richmond District The largely residential Richmond District reaches from Arguello to the Pacific on the northern edge of Golden Gate Park. It's a bit out of the way to base yourself here, but there are some attractions that will appeal to visitors. The main drag, Geary Boulevard, boasts all kinds of Asian, Russian, and Middle Eastern restaurants and groceries. Clement Street is the other Chinatown, less dense but still filled with imports, small bakeries, and delicatessens. The **California Palace of the Legion of Honor** museum in Lincoln Park, the **Cliff House,** and **Land's End** all have Richmond District zip codes.

The Sunset District This is the city's other large residential area, on the southern side of Golden Gate Park. It borders Ocean Beach, which can be splendid on the few fogless days of summer. (It's more likely to be sunny in the spring or early fall). Just be wary of ocean currents, which are dangerous at all times of year, and especially so in fall and winter. The **San Francisco Zoo** is the Sunset's main visitor attraction, followed by Stern Grove's summer Sunday concerts or a hike at **Fort Funston.** If you happen to take the N-Judah streetcar to Golden Gate Park, you might want to browse the stores and restaurants along Irving Street and 9th Avenue. Like the Richmond, this isn't an area most people would choose to stay in because it's too far from downtown.

The Tenderloin The blocks enclosed by Sutter and Taylor streets and Van Ness and Golden Gate avenues, directly west of Union Square, are known as the Tenderloin. This is home to recent immigrants who are living alongside massage parlors, flophouses, bars, and individuals in various stages of deterioration doing what they can to hold on. It's rough. This is no place to roam in the evening, with or without children, so I don't recommend choosing a hotel in this neighborhood. The one haven very worth dropping by is **Glide Memorial Church** on O'Farrell and Jones streets. Sunday services are ey e-opening—old-fashioned sermonizing, rousing music, and a cross-section of residents.

2 PLANNING YOUR OUTINGS

Successful touring with kids requires preplanning or an extremely mellow attitude, and preferably both. (In fact, an extremely mellow attitude is as important as a warm jacket.) Deciding beforehand, even the night before, what you'd like to do each day is much preferable to winging it. Otherwise, you're going to waste time debating whether to go to Fisherman's Wharf or the zoo or Chinatown and not be prepared for any of them. Above, I listed some suggested itineraries that should help you plan your time in San Francisco.

Before you arrive in San Francisco, spend some time with the kids talking about the activities and attractions the city has to offer and make a list that includes both adult-oriented and kid-oriented sites. Make a family calendar, but don't overschedule; one outing in the morning and one in the afternoon is enough, because playing tourist can be exhausting. Once you've all had some input into deciding where to go and what to do, give everyone old enough to carry a backpack a copy of the itinerary. That way, if someone starts to whine about going to their chosen attraction, you can point to the calendar and remind them that their time will come. This advice is good no matter what ages your kids are, assuming that they are old enough to state an opinion.

Getting around the city with your children should be hassle-free, for the most part. The one exception is if it's necessary to cart around baby paraphernalia such as strollers and diaper bags, because it's difficult to get on and off buses when your hands are full and the bus is crowded. In this case, you'll want to plan your itinerary to decrease your dependence on public transportation and walk as much as possible, or take advantage of the wider entrances and exits on Muni streetcars. Again, for families with kids of any age, always factor in extra time to get around—even if you are driving, since there's a good chance you'll either get lost or spend 20 minutes looking for paking. San Francisco buses are slow; in addition to the scheduled stops, there's traffic to deal with and the occasional breakdown. The streetcars are a little better time-wise, but can be crowded. Remember, in a new destination, part of the pleasure really is in the journey itself. That's certainly the case in San Francisco.

TOP NEIGHBORHOODS FOR FAMILY OUTINGS

Union Square

Although few obvious children's attractions exist in what is first and foremost a shopping paradise, Union Square is the psychological heart of the city and may be used as a launching pad for other excursions. Kids may find the crowds, clanging cable cars, and big buildings exciting. Moreover, Union Square itself now hosts entertainment, both ad hoc and planned. In the winter months, the plaza's enormous Christmas tree and Macy's holiday decorations are especially festive. Specifically, kid-friendly activities here include riding the glass elevator at the Westin St. Francis Hotel, greeting the beefeater-clad doorman at the Sir Francis Drake, and visiting the Disney Store. Teens may enjoy checking out the Levi's and Diesel stores, among other shops.

When Nature Calls: The ladies lounge at Neiman Marcus has one of the better bathrooms in town and is the best indoor place to nurse your baby. Macy's also has several restrooms. The big hotels are also great for bathroom breaks.

South of Market (SoMa)

The walk from Union Square east to the SoMa neighborhood takes maybe 5 minutes and brings you into an amazing cultural zone. The Yerba Buena Gardens, Metreon, the Cartoon Art Museum, SFMOMA (the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), and the California Academy of Sciences can all be reached on foot and can certainly make up a full day's program. Families with determined teens may want to tour the Westfield San Francisco Centre mall at 5th and Market streets as well.

When Nature Calls: The Westfield mall has a childr en's area tailor-made for changing diapers and nursing. The children's section downstairs in Bloomingdale's has spacious restrooms and an area for nursing moms; the ladies' room at Nordstrom also has an area for nursing moms. Metreon is also well equipped with toilets.

Chinatown

North of Union Square, a short walk up Grant Street, is the entrance to Chinatown. The draw here for you and yours is the sights and sounds of a community that is steeped in local history but which preserves its unique for eign culture. Possible stops include the playgrounds at St. Mary's Square or Portsmouth Square, the Chinese Cultural Center, the Canton Bazaar, the Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Company, and lunch.

When Nature Calls: Local merchants probably will not let you to use their bathrooms (few shopkeepers will in any neighborhood), so in an emergency make your way to the

Tips Enjoying Fisherman's Wharf

Fisherman's Wharf is on the water, of course, and that often means fog, or at least a cool breeze. So bring sweaters. If you plan to take the ferry to Alcatraz, bring jackets as well. Schedule rest/play periods to help avoid meltdowns and consider packing snacks—the food in this area can be crummy and expensive.

Chinatown Holiday Inn across from Portsmouth Square on Kearny Street. Remind everyone to use the toilet after lunch if you are eating at a restaurant. Nursing moms can feel free to feed their babies on a park bench here or anywhere in town, really. Just throw a blanket over your shoulder and chest for a little privacy.

Fisherman's Wharf

Children could easily be entertained here for an entire day. For a more tranquil visit, hang out on the Ghirardelli side, where kids can climb aboard the Hyde Street Pier boats, frolic at the Aquatic Park beach, and listen to music in the courtyard of The Cannery. For a healthy dose of over-stimulation, walk east to see PIER 39's sea lions, the Aquarium of the Bay, and Musée Mécanique, and to catch the ferries for a bay cruise. Two scenic public transportation options from Union Square are the Powell-Hyde cable car or the F-Market streetcar.

When Nature Calls: The best public restroom here is on the Hyde Street Pier. Public bathrooms are also located on the second floor of The Cannery, at Ghirardelli, and on PIER 39. Nursing moms will have to grab a blanket and a bench. Try the courtyard at The Cannery or the east side of PIER 39.

Golden Gate Park

The 1,000-plus acres making up this urban oasis are filled with activities that will excite both children and their parents. Kids will love the Koret Children's Quarter, the antique carousel, Japanese Tea Garden, and Stow Lake, and adults can admire Strybing Arboretum and the picturesque Conservatory of Flowers. It's easy to get to the park using public transportation, but kids may tire of the walk to reach the various attractions within it. A rest stop at one of the cafes or restaurants on 9th Avenue may help. The spectacular California Academy of Sciences and the de Young Museum are highlights of the park.

When Nature Calls: Public restrooms are available inside the de Young Museum lobby (accessible without an admission fee), as well as near the Children's Playground, Stow Lake, and the Conservatory of Flowers. Nursing moms can find any comfortable spot or head for the Strybing Arboretum.

3 THE BEST OF SAN FRANCISCO IN 1 DAY

If you have just 1 day in San Francisco, this itinerary introduces you to many of the city's most famous attractions without leaving your kids, or you, in a heap. You'll visit Union Square, ride a scenic cable car route, tour Fisherman's Wharf, take a break in North Beach, and gape at the sights, sounds, and smells of Chinatown. While it seems like a lot,

it's quite manageable—all attractions are located within 2 square miles. I've avoided overly ambitious suggestions in order to factor in slower walkers, emergency potty breaks, and the tough time you may have tearing the kids away from PIER 39. This itinerary will keep your family moving from one colorful place to the next, giving your children little time to complain of boredom. Indeed, with the "crookedest street in the world," antique ships, and noisy sea lions, chances are your kids will want to keep going even when you're tuckered out. Just in case, I've noted plenty of playgrounds and grassy areas where everyone can take a break.

Powell-Hyde cable car turnaround at Powell and Market streets.

❶ Union Square/Market Street/ Powell-Hyde Cable Car Line ★

If you're staying in a hotel, there's a good chance you'll be near the Powell-Hyde cable car line. (That said, if you're staying in Fisherman's Wharf, you may prefer to start this tour at stop no. 3 below and then fit in time for Union Square after visiting Chinatown.) Your first stop, the cable car "turnaround" at the corner of Market and Powell streets, is the heart of San Francisco's shopping scene. Given the ever-present queue for the cable car, you'll want to get there early, which may mean you'll be out before the stores open. Even so, you'll enjoy people-watching, from local worker bees starting their day to other early-rising tourists to street performers getting ready to perform to the occasional odd bird carrying a sign lamenting the coming doomsday. It's certainly a lively spot to start your excursion. See p. 159.

❷ San Francisco Cable Cars (& Cable Car Museum) ★★

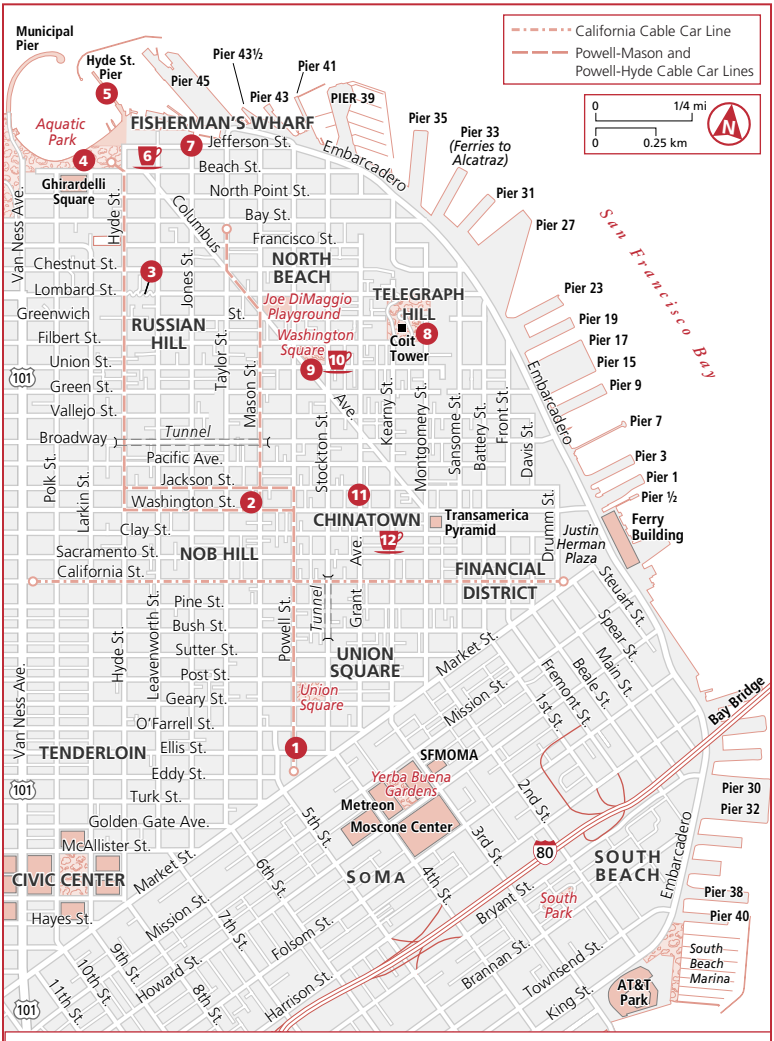
A cable car ride is an attraction in itself. Created in 1973 as an alternative to horse-drawn carriages, which proved difficult and at times even dangerous on the city's steep hills, cable cars actually have no engines. Instead, cables running underground on the cable car lines move at a constant speed of 9½ mph. The car's conductor, called a "gripper," controls a lever that opens and closes a vise-like grip on the cable to either move or stop. The Powell-Hyde line runs up some of San Francisco's steepest streets, giving you a good sense of the city's photogenic, hilly topography. You'll pass right by the Cable Car Museum (p. 178). If it's past 10am, take a moment to check it out. It's free and quite interesting. If it's closed, perhaps you can take a detour there later when you are in Chinatown.

❸ Lombard Street ★

After passing the Cable Car Museum, the cable car continues climbing Nob Hill and then turns north onto Russian Hill's tree-lined Hyde Street. At the top of Hyde Street, get off at the intersection with Lombard Street, the so-called "crookedest street in the world." Snap some photos of Alcatraz Island, the San Francisco Bay, Coit Tower, and Telegraph Hill—just try not to do so from the middle of the street, as some over-enthusiastic sightseers are wont to do. Then stroll down, and back up, the Lombard Street steps; in spring and early summer, the street is lined with colorful blossoms. See p. 162.

❹ Victoria Park, Ghirardelli Square & Aquatic Park ★★

Now you can either walk the three extremely steep blocks down Hyde Street toward Fisherman's Wharf, or hop back on the cable car. Either way, you'll end up at Victoria Park, a lovely expanse of grass at the edge of the San Francisco Bay. Walk left 1 block to Ghirardelli Square, an old-time chocolate factory now housing shops and restaurants. Since it'll be too early for ice cream, you'll have an excuse not to wait in line at the Ghirardelli Soda Fountain and



1. Union Square/Market Street/ Powell-Hyde Cable Car Line
2. San Francisco Cable Cars (and Cable Car Museum)
3. Lombard Street
4. Victoria Park, Ghirardelli Square, and Aquatic Park
5. Hyde Street Pier
6. San Francisco Crepe Cart
7. Fisherman's Wharf
8. Telegraph Hill and Coit Tower
9. Washington Square and North Beach
10. Gelato Classico
11. Chinatown
12. R&G Lounge

Chocolate Shop (p. 244). Instead, take in the view of the bay and Alcatraz Island and walk down through Victoria Park to the water's edge. At any time of day, you're likely to find hardy (or perhaps just crazy) souls swimming in the frigid 50-something degree waters, often without wetsuits. Many are part of the Dolphin Club, founded by German immigrants in 1877, whose clubhouse now sits on the Hyde Street Pier.

5 Hyde Street Pier ★★★

Walk over to the Hyde Street Pier (p. 170) and purchase tickets to board the antique ships. Enjoy stunning views of the bay and the Golden Gate Bridge while your children explore an elegant 19th-century square-rigger, an 1890 ferryboat chock-full of antique cars, and a 100-year-old tugboat. After checking out engine rooms, captain's quarters, and even a replicated turn-of-the-20th-century concession stand, cross the street to the Maritime National Historical Park Visitor Center for a look at intricate model boats and more info on the city's seafaring past. The visitor center is in The Cannery, a 1907 red-brick structure that was once the world's largest peach-canning facility and now houses a collection of stores, including the enchanting Lark in the Morning Musique Shoppe. Stop by The Cannery courtyard to see if any musicians are playing.

6 SAN FRANCISCO CREPE CART ★

This quaint cart offers savory and sweet crepes, with fillings like ham and cheese or bananas and chocolate, to be enjoyed in the lovely courtyard at The Cannery, sometimes to the accompaniment of live music from folksy local performers. See p. 132.

7 Fisherman's Wharf ★

Head east toward the heart of Fisherman's Wharf (p. 168). At Pier 45, step into the Musée Mécanique (p. 171), a fun antique arcade. If your kids like big boats and battles, splurge on tours of the SS *Jeremiah O'Brien,* a WWII "Liberty Ship," and the WWII submarine USS *Pampanito* (p. 173). Our girls are staunch pacifists, but they still loved the tours—as I'm sure will our son when he's older. As you continue east, steer clear of the cheesy tourist shops (you'll find plenty of souvenirs later on in Chinatown) and brace yourselves for the crowds at PIER 39 (p. 172). PIER 39 is my least favorite place on the wharf, but my opinion clearly counts for little, since it's actually the third most visited U.S. tourist destination, behind Disneyworld and Disneyland. If you can get past the candy, cookie, and fudge shops, what does it actually have going for it? Three things: an enjoyable, albeit pricey, aquarium; an antique carousel; and the city's infamous, smelly sea lions. Between those three things, a plethora of toy stores, and the aforementioned sweet shops, good luck tearing the kids away.

8 Telegraph Hill & Coit Tower ★

After the bustle of Fisherman's Wharf, you'll enjoy the serene city views from atop Telegraph Hill, named for a semaphore installed there in 1850 to alert residents of ships' arrivals, and crowned by a strange obelisk called Coit Tower. The trek may be too much for little legs. Fortunately, the no. 39-Coit bus takes you from the corner of Stockton and Beach streets right up to Coit Tower. Inside the tower, check out murals celebrating the rural and urban working class, painted by students of Diego Rivera, then splurge on an elevator ride to the top. Afterwards, walk or bus back down to Washington Park. See p. 183.

9 Washington Park & North Beach ★

Now relax in Washington Square, one of the city's oldest parks, dating to 1847. Let the children play in the small playground while you take in the scene in this historic

neighborhood. In the 1870s, Genoese and Sicilian immigrants set up countless Italian restaurants, cafes, and bakeries in the neighborhood, and they worshiped at the lovely Saints Peter & Paul Church overlooking the park. (Today, the church offers services in English, Italian, and Chinese.)

10 GELATO CLASSICO ★
After your trek, it's time to reward yourselves with some lovely Italian ice cream at Gelato Classico, located steps away from Washington Park. See p. 127.

11 Chinatown ★★★

Wander south on Stockton Street, and the sights and sounds of Chinatown come into focus. Stockton Street is the "real" Chinatown, where the area's residents come to buy groceries and medicines and to socialize. Check out the fascinating, seemingly chaotic grocery stores, before turning left toward Grant Street, which runs parallel to Stockton Street. Grant Street is the tourists' Chinatown, festooned with colorful banners and offering a dizzying array of knickknacks to buy for the friends back home. Don't miss Waverly Place, with its painted balconies, and the Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Co. on Ross Alley. See p. 165.

12 R&G LOUNGE ★★
This is one of the better places to eat in Chinatown, but you've got to know how to order. Pass on the Westernized menu and ask what fresh fish is available. Order it prepared simply with garlic or salt and pepper, and be ready for a delicious feast. See p. 120.

4 THE BEST OF SAN FRANCISCO IN 2 DAYS

This second day in San Francisco is likely to be your kids' favorite. The tour includes two world-class science museums and two parks (Golden Gate Park and Crissy Field) that rank amongst the loveliest on the planet. In addition to the bay views you enjoyed on Day 1, you'll also get a chance to gaze upon San Francisco's other coast, the one lapped by the Pacific Ocean. ***Note:*** To fit these sites into one day, I've estimated about an hour at each museum. If your kids are science buffs, or art aficionados, you may have to skip some of the outdoor sites, like Crissy Field, to have more time at the Exploratorium, Academy of Sciences, and/or de Young Museum.

From the corner of Stockton and Sutter streets, take the no. 30-Stockton bus to Chestnut and Fillmore streets; if going straight to the second stop on the tour, take the no. 30 bus to Broderick and Beach streets. (The no. 30X-Marina express also stops at Chestnut and Fillmore sts. and then at Scott & Beach sts.)

1 Chestnut Street/The Marina District ★

If the kids have woken up early and are ready to go, head to this popular residential street lined with restaurants, shops, and cafes for a taste of San Francisco city life. There's a good chance you'll see other moms or dads out and about pushing strollers and buying the morning paper, or local urbanites popping into Peet's Coffee & Tea for a double latte before hopping on the bus downtown. If you have the time, head to **The Grove** (p. 136), grab a cup of joe and maybe some oatmeal for the kids, and enjoy the local scene. If you got a late start, or if the family lingered over breakfast at your hotel, skip this stop and head straight to no. 2.

2 Exploratorium ★★★

Your kids may well list this highly regarded science museum as their favorite place in San Francisco. This hands-on museum offers so many exhibits that you really should arrive right when it opens at 10am to have a full hour to enjoy just a fraction of them. If your kids are young, they'll find easy-to-understand exhibits at the light and optics area at the rear, while the biology displays on the mezzanine level will fascinate older kids. If a toddler amongst you is overwhelmed by all the activity, have a parent take him or her to the back play area for a break, but don't linger there too long, as there is simply so much to see. See p. 160.

3 The Palace of Fine Arts & the Wave Organ ★

When you step out of the darkened Exploratorium Hall into the light of day, take a moment to appreciate the lovely scenery at the Palace of Fine Arts (p. 161) abutting the Exploratorium. Have your kids look at the ducks and run on the grass before heading north on Baker Street, crossing Marina Boulevard and continuing to the water's edge. Walk onto the breakwater, where you'll see the bizarre Wave Organ (p. 202), created by scientists from the Exploratorium.

4 Crissy Field ★★★

Head west to view this restored wetlands area, which less than a decade ago was an unsightly abandoned military airstrip. You'll see joggers, dog walkers, bike riders of all ages, stroller-pushers, and plenty of other locals enjoying what is the youngest national park in the Bay Area, located next to the Golden Gate Bridge. Crissy Field is best at this time of day, when the morning fog has worn off but the afternoon winds, which attract expert wind- and kite-surfers from throughout the Bay Area, have not yet picked up.

5 de Young Museum ★★★

Now walk or take the Presidio-Go shuttle to Richardson Avenue and Francisco Street. There, transfer to the no. 28-19th Avenue bus. Take it to the corner of Fulton Street and 19th Avenue; then walk east to the de Young Museum (p. 179). Many areas of this terrific museum, including the main lobby, to wer, and sculpture garden, are free to visitors. You may want to go first to the cafe for a quick lunch (see "Take a Break" below). Then head up to the Tower, which affords great views of northwest San Francisco and the Pacific Ocean, vistas you won't have seen from Coit Tower. From there, you'll also get a bird's eye view of the astounding living grass roof of the California Academy of Sciences, your next stop on the tour.

6 DE YOUNG CAFÉ ★★

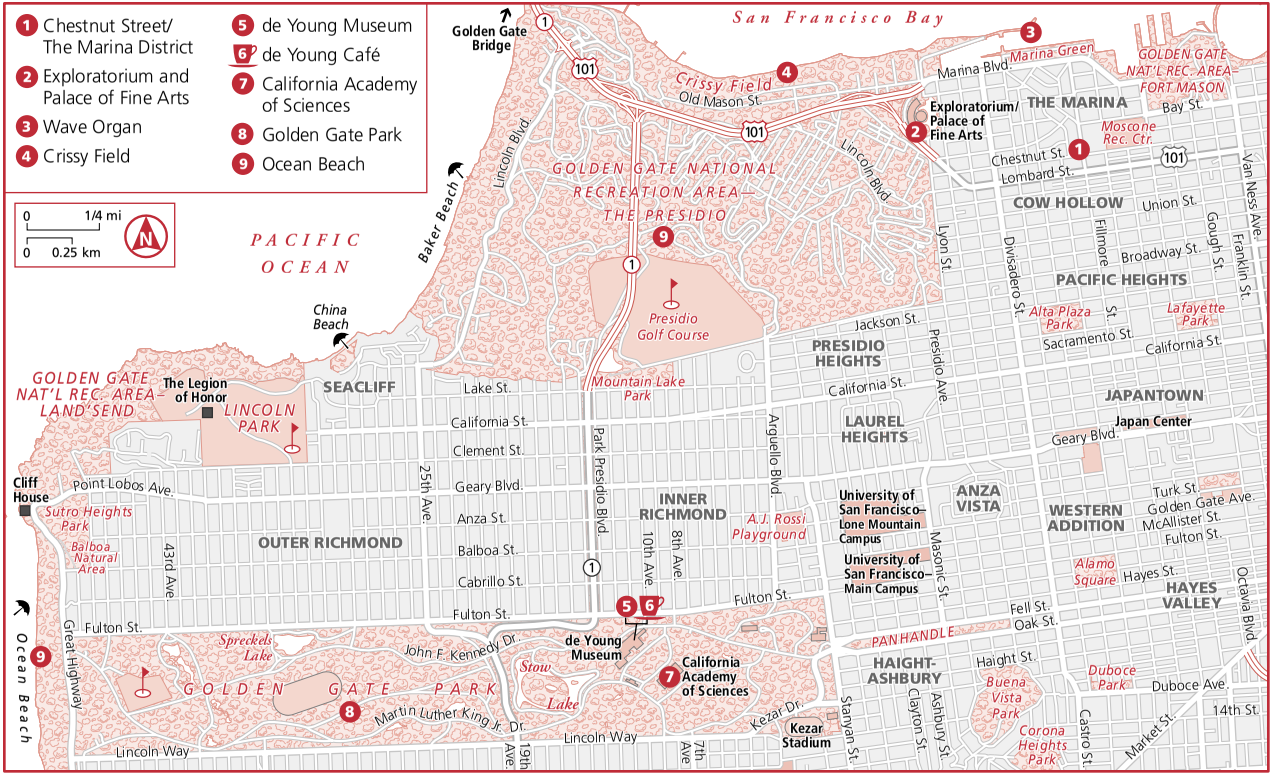
Hop in line to order creative sandwiches made with sustainable ingredients (even the PB&Js use organic peanut butter), enticing salads, or healthy hot dishes. Then grab a table outside to enjoy lunch by the sculpture garden. The kids can touch the sculptures and even go inside of one as you sip your post-lunch espresso.

7 California Academy of Sciences ★★★

Step into the most ecological museum building in the world. Opened in September 2008, the much lauded and ecologically cutting-edge Academy of Sciences is home to 40,000 live animals, a planetarium, an aquarium, and a natural history museum. See p. 178 for how to best organize your time here. Beyond the impressive building itself, there is a lot to see here.

8 Golden Gate Park ★★★

Beyond the de Young Museum and the Academy of Sciences, Golden Gate Park


1 Chestnut Street/ The Marina District
2 Exploratorium and Palace of Fine Arts
3 Wave Organ
4 Crissy Field
5 de Young Museum
6 de Young Café
7 California Academy of Sciences
8 Golden Gate Park
9 Ocean Beach
0 1/4 mi
0 0.25 km
N
San Francisco Bay
Golden Gate Bridge
Crissy Field
Old Mason St.
Marina Blvd
Marina Green
GOLDEN GATE NAT'L REC. AREA FORT MASON
Exploratorium/ Palace of Fine Arts
THE MARINA
Bay St.
Moscone Rec. Ctr.
Chestnut St.
Lombard St.
101
Lincoln Blvd.
GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA— THE PRESIDIO
COW HOLLOW
Union St.
Filmore
Broadway St.
Gough St.
Franklin St.
Van Ness Ave.
Divisadero St.
Lyon St.
PACIFIC HEIGHTS
Alta Plaza Park
Lafayette Park
Sacramento St.
California St.
Jackson St.
Presidio Ave.
PRESIDIO HEIGHTS
Presidio Golf Course
Baker Beach
PACIFIC OCEAN
China Beach
GOLDEN GATE NAT'L REC. AREA— LAND'S END
The Legion of Honor
LINCOLN PARK
SEACLIFF
Lake St.
Mountain Lake Park
California St.
Clement St.
Geary Blvd.
Anza St.
Balboa St.
Cabrillo St.
Fulton St.
Park Presidio Blvd.
Arguello Blvd.
25th Ave.
10th Ave.
8th Ave.
LAUREL HEIGHTS
JAPANTOWN
Japan Center
Geary Blvd.
Cliff House
Point Lobos Ave.
Sutro Heights Park
Balboa Natural Area
43rd Ave.
OUTER RICHMOND
INNER RICHMOND
A.J. Rossi Playground
University of San Francisco– Lone Mountain Campus
University of San Francisco– Main Campus
Masonic St.
ANZA VISTA
WESTERN ADDITION
Turk St.
Golden Gate Ave.
McAllister St.
Fulton St.
Alamo Square
Hayes St.
HAYES VALLEY
Octavia Blvd.
Fell St.
Oak St.
PANHANDLE
Ocean Beach
Great Highway
Fulton St.
Sprecklels Lake
John F. Kennedy Dr.
de Young Museum
California Academy of Sciences
Stow Lake
GOLDEN GATE PARK
Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.
Lincoln Way
19th Ave
7th Ave
Kezar Dr.
Kezar Stadium
Stanyan St.
HAIGHT-ASHBURY
Haight St.
Buena Vista Park
Duboce Park
Duboce Ave.
14th St.
Clayton St.
Ashbury St.
Corona Heights Park
Castro St.
Market St.

(p. 173), one of the greatest urban parks in America, has a lot more to offer—but that will depend on how much energy the kids have and how much daylight remains. If the family is still raring to go, walk from the Academy past the lovely Rose Garden and toward the Conservatory of Flowers (p. 175), a stunning glass structure overlooking a garden with thousands of flowers out front. If it's still open, you'll enjoy the Conservatory's collection of unusual and exotic plants. Or you could head straight across JFK Drive to the Carousel and the Koret Children's Quarter, a very large, very creative playground where you can thank the kids for their patience all day and let them loose for a while. Other lovely places in the park—located behind the de Young in the opposite direction from the playground—are the Japanese Tea Garden, Botanical Gardens, and Stowe Lake.

9 Ocean Beach ★

Still raring to go? If it's a clear day, take the no. 5-Fulton bus (board at Fulton St. and 8th Ave.) out to Ocean Beach (p. 217). You'll see a San Francisco vista too many tourists miss out on. Most tourists only see the part of the city that opens out onto the Bay, missing the entire western shore of the San Francisco peninsula that abuts the Pacific Ocean. The water at Ocean Beach is not safe for swimming, although expert surfers can't stay away from its powerful waves. If you time it right, you'll enjoy a lovely sunset.

5 THE BEST OF SAN FRANCISCO IN 3 DAYS

If you're lucky enough to have a third day in San Francisco, then start it by heading back to Fisherman's Wharf for a tour of iconic Alcatraz Island. You'll also explore some of the most altered neighborhoods in the city, former industrial areas that now house a growing share of the city's cultural and culinary highlights. Along the way, you'll find plenty of time for the kids to stretch their legs and run around.

F-Market streetcar to Pier 33 or no. 10-Townsend bus from Sansome and Sacramento streets to the Embarcadero and Bay Street.

1 Alcatraz Island ★★★

What could be so special about an old prison? Plenty. To begin with, the ferry ride over to Alcatraz Island gives you the chance to get out onto the bay and see how lovely San Francisco looks from the water. Of course, most kids enjoy a fun boat ride as well. The prison audio tour, updated in late 200, is better than ever, giving you the eerie sense of what it was like for prisoners, guards, and even the guards' families to live on a windswept rock in the middle of the bay. You'll hear about some of the nation's most famous criminals and death-defying escape attempts sure to enthrall kids and adults alike. Order tickets well ahead of time; online is best, as you can print them out at home and head straight to the ferry line-up at Pier 33. I recommend taking the first ferry of the day, at 9:30am, as the prison will be less crowded when you arrive. Bring sweaters, comfortable shoes, and something to eat (or choose from the options—some of them organic—on the ferry), as there's no concession stand on the island. See p. 156. (***Note:*** If you were unable to reserve Alcatraz tickets in time, take a 1-hour bay cruise on the Blue & Gold Fleet. In addition to lovely vistas of the city and an up-close look at the Golden Gate Bridge, an audio track imparts plenty of history and local city lore. See p. 185.)

1. Alcatraz Island
2. F-Market Streetcar and the Embarcadero Promenade
3. Ferry Building
4. Taylor's Refresher
5. AT&T Park
6. SoMa
7. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA)
8. Yerba Buena Gardens and Center for the Arts
9. Civic Center
10. Café Zuni
11. Frjtz

❷ F-Market Streetcar & the Embarcadero Promenade

After Alcatraz, hop on the F-Market streetcar headed toward Market Street. The F-Market line uses refurbished streetcars from around the world, so you might find yourself on a turn-of-the-century trolley from Kansas City or an antique streetcar from Milan. The picturesque streetcars are part of the overall upgrade to this section of town, which was fueled by the 1989 earthquake that destroyed the unattractive elevated freeway that once obscured the water's edge. The new promenade now bordering the waterfront all the way from Fisherman's Wharf to AT&T Park is a delightful place to stroll or cycle, with 13-foot-tall metal pylons and bronze plaques embedded in the promenade sidewalk and imprinted with photographs, drawings, poetry, and historical facts about the waterfront.

❸ Ferry Building ★★★

You'll arrive at the Ferry Building, at once a reminder of San Francisco's maritime history and a symbol of the city's position as an important culinary center. Before the construction of the bay's bridges and the underwater BART tunnel, the Ferry Building oversaw one of the most complex ferry systems in the country. After a multi-million-dollar renovation completed in 2003, the Ferry Building is now home to a number of upscale shops offering gourmet, organic, and/or sustainably raised meats, vegetables, breads, chocolates, and even mushrooms. Twice a week the Ferry Building holds the world-class Farmer's Market, attracting San Franciscans of all stripes who are passionate about good food and quality ingredients. Take a moment to walk out back and watch the ferries, which now primarily service commuters who live in Marin County, come and go. See p. 161.

❹ TAYLOR'S REFRESHER ★

To San Franciscans, high-quality, sustainably produced food needn't always be expensive or complicated. It can, and should, be available in the everyday comfort foods we all enjoy. Step inside and order a juicy burger made with locally raised meat and topped with tomatoes and lettuce fresh from the Farmer's Market. Your taste buds will notice the difference between this and an ordinary diner, but your wallet won't. See p. 125.

❺ AT&T Park ★

This is an optional stop primarily for sports fans, but if you choose to visit you'll have less time for the attractions in SoMa. If you do go, public transportation will prove more efficient than feet, so take the N-Judah streetcar headed toward AT&T Park. Get off at the 2nd & King Station. On non-game days, the ballpark has a playground just for kids. After the kids have had a chance to play, take the no. 15-3rd St. bus to 3rd and Mission streets. See p. 265.

❻ SoMa ★★★

Like the revamped Embarcadero, this section of town has undergone its own transformation since the early 1990s. Once an industrial wasteland, SoMa is now home to many top museums and galleries. The recently opened Contemporary Jewish Museum (p. 179) is the newest addition; others include the Museum of the African Diaspora (p. 180), the Cartoon Art Museum (p. 179), and the SFMOMA, noted below. Moreover, the Yerba Buena Center, with its waterfalls, lawn, and playgrounds, provides a pleasant respite.

❼ San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) ★★★

If you only have time to check out one museum in SoMa, this should be it. The SFMOMA boasts one of the more extensive collections of 20th- and 21st-century

art in the country, and is housed in an impressive building designed by the Swiss architect Mario Botta. If the kids are tired—or not big museum-goers—head straight to the permanent collection on the second floor. The wacky Warhols, playful Pollocks, and magical Matisses are sure to perk them up. You'll also see some impressive sculptures and a Calder mobile or two. See p. 182.

8 Yerba Buena Gardens & Center for the Arts ★★★

In addition to a 775-seat theater, art galleries, and a 5-acre garden, you'll also find a children's playground, an antique carousel, and other family-friendly attractions here. If you have time, pop into Zeum, where the kids can make their own clay-mation-style film clips or create their own cartoon character. If you want some downtime, have the kids play at the playground or enjoy the fountain dedicated to Martin Luther King, Jr., while you savor the interesting architectural vantage points offered in this urban oasis.

9 Civic Center ★★★

You may want to end your tour in SoMa. After all, you've seen a lot in three days. However, if the kids are old enough to be studying civic history or even architecture, I recommend hopping on a Market Street streetcar and heading to the Civic Center, built in the grand Beaux Arts style following the devastating 1906 earthquake. Simply walking around the impressive buildings—including the SF Public Library's main branch, the Asian Art Museum, and City Hall—is enough. Your kids may be interested to know that the dome of City Hall is taller than the U.S. Capitol building. ***Note:*** If it's late in the day before you leave SoMa, skip this stop. The Civic Center gets dodgy at night.

10 ZUNI CAFÉ ★

Since you visited the Ferry Building and saw how seriously San Franciscans take their food, you might as well visit one of the first restaurants in town devoted to delicious, uncomplicated cooking using local, seasonal ingredients (p. 132). For a more casual dinner, try the offerings at **Frjtz,** which include crispy Belgian fries, salads, and crepes (p. 133).

4

Family-Friendly Accommodations

Families seeking a place to hang their hats will find plenty of options in San Francisco. In addition to several internationally recognized hotel chains, the city boasts an outstanding collection of smaller hotels in every price category. Companies like Joie de Vivre Hospitality and Kimpton hotels have transformed a number of historic buildings (and even some lowly motels) into luxurious boutique inns, delightful mid-priced hotels, and inexpensive, but festive, family accommodations.

Although downtown hotels rely mainly on convention and business travelers to fill rooms, several have become more kid-friendly in recent years as more guests take the family along on work trips. Many higher-end hotels offer kids' gift packs at check-in, and concierges provide information on child-oriented activities in town. Several hotel restaurants also feature kids' menus. Moreover, nearly all city hotels allow children to stay free in parents' rooms and provide cribs at no charge.

Because many hotels in the city center are housed in older buildings, guest rooms are often small and interconnecting rooms are not an option. Small guest rooms also mean that it's hard to find truly budget options downtown, since rooms aren't big enough for a family of four—meaning you'd have to spring for a suite or two rooms. In the moderate range, though, you'll find a bigger selection of Union Square hotels with rooms to fit a family of four. Even with expanded bathroom counterspace and other upgrades to better accommodate families, prepare for cozy quarters in all but the most expensive downtown accommodations.

The most family-oriented hotels are in Fisherman's Wharf and the Marina, although the majority lack the charm of the downtown hotels. Because they're housed in more modern buildings, many have rooms that will accommodate more than just a couple and a crib. You'll find the best rates in the Marina, but public transportation there is limited to a few bus lines (elsewhere, cable cars, streetcars, and/or more bus lines are also available). It's a better choice if you're traveling with a car.

When choosing a part of town in which to stay, think about family members' special needs or interests. Perhaps a little one takes a midday nap, so a central location would be best. If you have active young children, you may appreciate the playgrounds within walking distance of Marina or Nob Hill hotels. Teens may prefer Union Square or SoMa for proximity to shopping and the Metreon. If your family's main interests are classic attractions such as Alcatraz and Ghirardelli Square, Fisherman's Wharf could be the place (although

Tips **Rubber Ducky Not Included**

Most hotel bathrooms have combination shower/bathtubs, but lower priced accommodations may have only showers. If your kids are still in the tub-only phase, ask about bathtubs when making your reservation.

Tips Reservation Tips

Many hotels provide you with a booking reference number. Upon request, hotels send you written confirmation of your reservation by fax, e-mail, or snail mail. Keep this paperwork handy, as it will be helpful if you decide to modify your plans. If you do cancel a reservation, request a cancellation number. This is very important, especially if you made your reservation with a credit card.

the heavy concentration of tourists has its drawbacks, such as overpriced, mediocre food). For more information about the lodging merits of each neighborhood, refer to the "Neighborhoods in Brief" section of chapter 3.

To get the most bang for your buck at any price point, timing helps. If your dates are flexible, you may benefit from reduced hotel rates. Downtown hotels are cheapest on weekends, whereas the opposite is usually true in the Marina and Fisherman's Wharf. During conventions, Union Square and SoMa hotel rates jump, but you could luck out if a hotel hasn't managed to sell all of its rooms. It may be willing to offer steep discounts. Another option is to look into hotels off the beaten track, such as in Japantown or Laurel Heights.

Whereas downtown hotel prices don't vary much with the seasons, Marina and Fisherman's Wharf rates climb in the summer. Given the summertime fog, the price increase has less to do with the best time to visit San Francisco than with when most families take their vacations. If you buck the trend and come in the late winter, you'll save money.

The cheapest rooming option is usually one room with two queen-size beds. (***Note:*** Some downtown hotels have small rooms, and so have two double beds in place of queen-size beds.) With little ones, that could mean lights out well before mom and dad are ready to pack it in. If that's the case, or if you have older kids who need their space, the next best option is a suite, which tends to run cheaper than two interconnecting rooms. Just be alert: Many hotels throw a pullout sofa into an extra-big room and call it a "junior suite." If you want separate rooms, make sure that's what you're getting.

RESERVATION SERVICES San Francisco Reservations (✆ **800/677-1570** or 510/628-4450; www.hotelres.com) is a Bay Area company with a local call center. This no-fee service has access to hundreds of Bay Area hotels, a well designed website, and accurate descriptions. Online resources for excellent rates include www.placestostay.com and www.hotels.com.

If you plan a longer visit, consider bucking the hotel options altogether and lodge in a house or apartment. Agencies offer furnished apartments for stays as brief as 4 nights, and some Internet sites offer home exchanges with families in other cities and countries. I've listed some of these agencies and sites below.

American Marketing Systems (www.amsires.com) and **Executive Suites** (www.executivesuites-sf.com) offer furnished apartment rentals for stays of a few days or more, although rates can be high. Vacation rentals in houses, apartments, or condos by the night, week, or month can be found through **Vacation Rentals.com** (www.vacationrentals.com) or **HomeAway.com** (www.homeaway.com). To research house exchanges, check out **Homelink International** (www.homelink.org), **Home Base Holidays** (www.homebase-hols.com), and **International Home Exchange Network** (www.homexchange.com).

FAMILY-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATIONS

A NOTE ON PRICES I have listed "rack rates"—a hotel's highest room price—in categorizing my hotel picks. You will probably get a much better quote when you call. More than 16 million visitors came to San Francisco in 2007, pushing hotel occupancy rates to 79%. These numbers may dip along with the country's economic slowdown—meaning you'll find more weekend discounts, family packages, and other promotions. In this chapter, I've classified hotels based on cost for a family of four staying in one room, unless a specific hotel has space constraints that require staying in a suite or two connecting rooms. Prices do not include the 14% hotel tax, nor does it include parking, which can run from free to over $60 a night.

GETTING THE BEST RATE Nearly every moderate and high-end hotel I visited insisted that guests can almost certainly book rooms at rates well below the published rack rates—unless several business conventions are in town at the same time. The first step is checking multiple sources. Surf the Internet first and then call both the central reservations number, if there is one, and in-house reservations. Find which source has the best deal. Many hotels not only match a rate you have found on the Internet but also, in some cases, beat it.

It's important that you check with in-house reservations. I've had three different websites indicate a hotel was booked only to call the hotel directly and find that it had one room left (a suite, which didn't fit into the Internet's standard room category) that could be had for a steal. Moreover, folks in-house can provide the most detailed information about the hotel and the specific room type you may be interested in. You can also tell the hotel agent that you are traveling with children and inquire about special offers they may have.

As your arrival date nears, inquire again about any special deals. At check-in, don't hesitate to ask if you can upgrade to a bigger room or a higher floor. If the hotel has no hope of selling these better rooms for the next few nights, they may be willing to upgrade you at no additional charge.

KITCHENETTES Kitchenettes are a rarity in San Francisco, and I've noted nearly all that are available. Reserve for them well in advance.

POOLS Some kids will be happy anywhere you take them as long as there's a pool. But given San Francisco real estate prices, few hotels devote precious space to swimming facilities, and most pools that do exist are petite. Almost all the San Francisco hotels with pools are listed in this chapter.

ACCESSIBILITY The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that hotels built within the past 20 years accommodate the needs of disabled travelers. However, San Francisco hotels are often located in older

Tips Meals on a Budget

Having breakfast in your hotel room cuts back on restaurant bills. Also, some kids wake up at the crack of dawn when in new surroundings or time zones, well before any cafes are open. If you can't get a kitchenette, a fridge (and a coffeemaker for mom and dad) will do. If they're not already in your room, many hotels will provide these at no charge. Buy some disposable dishware, plastic cutlery, and some milk and cereal (or bread and butter, if that's what you're used to at home) and you're all set.

Tips The Corner Room

Don't forget to ask if the hotel has a corner room. In some instances, the corner room has more light (windows on two walls) and more space than a standard room, but costs the same.

buildings that are exempt from this rule. If you or any one in your family requires appropriately designed hotel rooms, look for a property that's been remodeled recently or built after 1985. Discuss your needs with the reservations clerk.

1 UNION SQUARE/FINANCIAL DISTRICT

This is the heart of the city, the focal point for shopping and entertainment. It's exciting, urban, and uniquely San Franciscan—and it's where you'll find the greatest range of accommodations. The downside for some families is the congestion and lack of greenery.

VERY EXPENSIVE

Hotel Nikko ★ Although this Eastern-influenced hotel caters largely to corporate travelers, it holds one of the few, and one of the most spacious, indoor swimming pools in the city. The pool is connected to the Nikko's health club, but the staff insists that guests tend to exercise in the early morning and evening, which means the rest of the day children can splash around freely. The pool is located in an expansive glass-roofed atrium, which also houses exercise equipment and Japanese hot tubs, so you can work out or enjoy a soak while you keep on eye on the kids. A full-service spa is set to open in 2009.

Decor is tastefully understated, and rooms get a lot of natural sunlight. With a pullout sofa and "guest washroom," the Nikko's junior suites are quite family-friendly. Even standard double-double rooms are large and have entryways that give the impression of more space. Views start above the 10th floor. Rooms on the three executive-level "Nikko Floors" also have vanities and more spacious bathrooms, and the Nikko Lounge offers board games and Internet access, so your teenagers can still IM their pals at home. The Nikko welcomes all pets. (Just be sure to inform the hotel if you plan to leave a Great Dane in your room for the day, so they can alert the housekeeping staff!) The white marble lobby is stark, but kids will enjoy the indoor fountain, which has become a multicurrency wishing well. The hotel houses an on-site Starbucks and Anzu restaurant, which specializes in sushi and steak, but has a children's menu as well.

222 Mason St. (btw. Ellis and O'Farrell sts.), San Francisco 94102. ✆ **800/248-3308** or 415/394-1111. Fax 415/394-1106. www.hotelnikkosf.com. 533 units, including 22 suites. $189–$359 double; $350–$2,900 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $30; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $40; oversized vehicles $45. Pets welcome. **Amenities:** Restaurant; pool; health club; spa (as of 2009); concierge; business center; JTB Travel agency; Enterprise Car Rental; salon; gift shop; 24-hr. room service; massage; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning; executive level rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, fax, dataport, wireless Internet access, minibar, fridge (on request), coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player, iPod dock.

Accommodations Near Union Square & the Financial District

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- Golden Gate Hotel **5**
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- Hotel AbRi **21**
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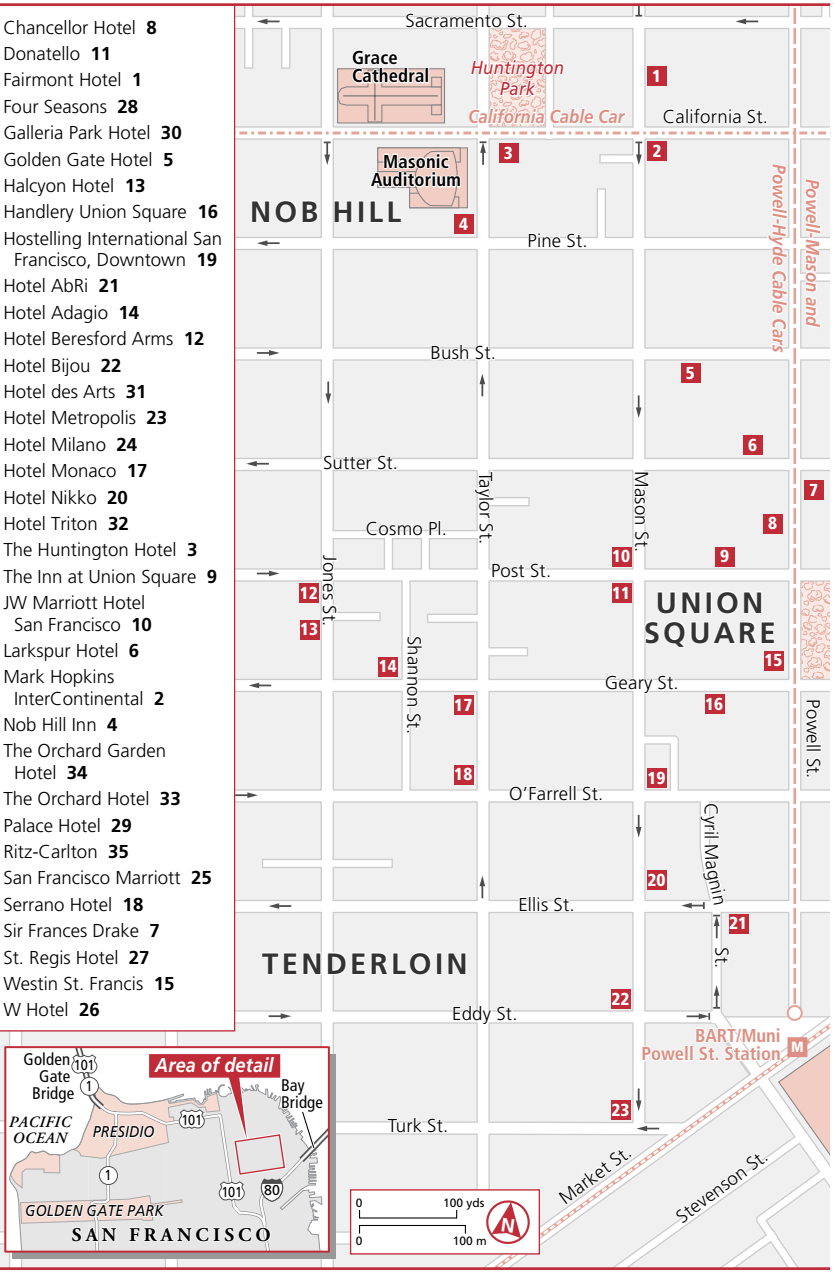

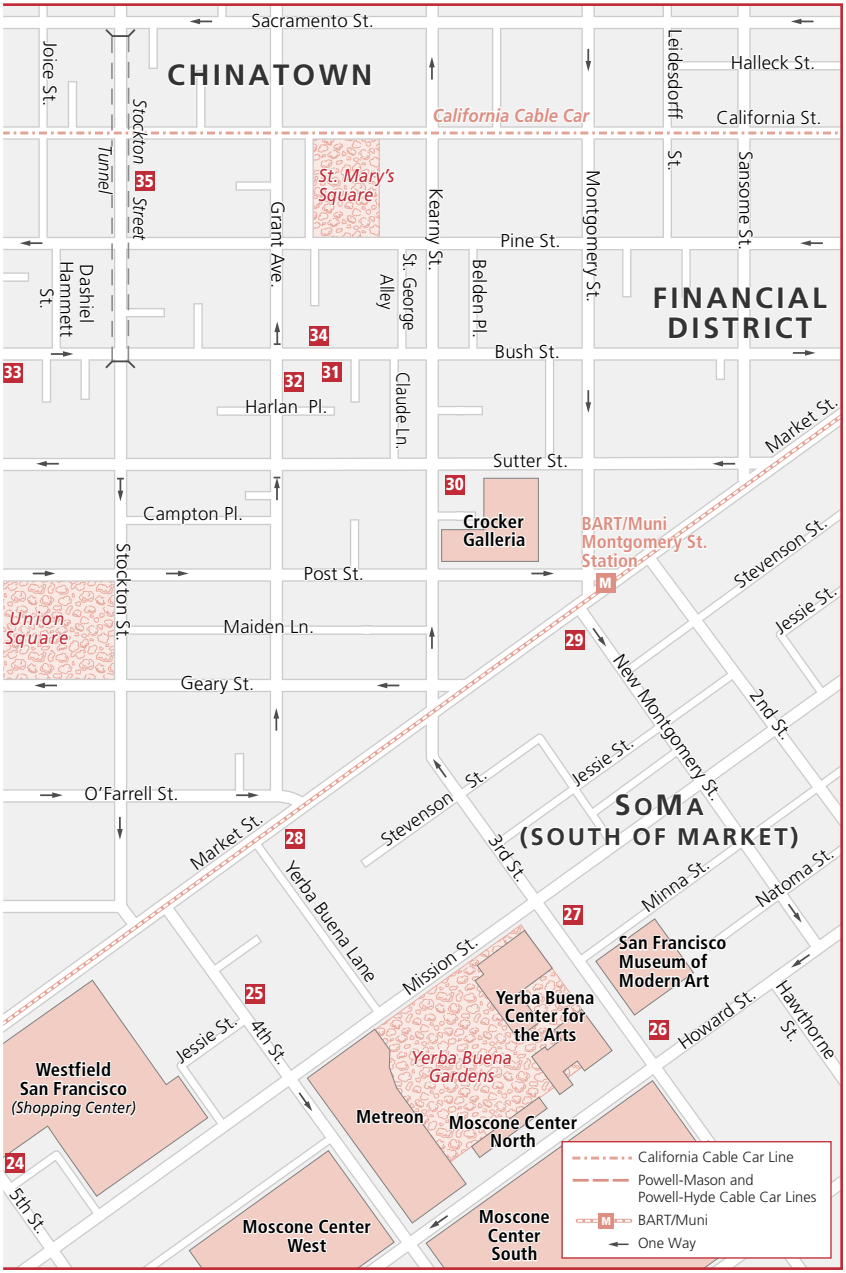
Sacramento St.
CHINATOWN
Joice St.
Stockton Street
Tunnel
35
California Cable Car
Halleck St.
Leidesdorff St.
California St.
St. Mary's Square
Grant Ave.
Kearny St.
Montgomery St.
Sansome St.
Pine St.
Dashiel Hammett St.
St. George Alley
Belden Pl.
FINANCIAL DISTRICT
34
Bush St.
33
32
31
Claude Ln.
Harlan Pl.
Market St.
Sutter St.
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Campton Pl.
Crocker Galleria
BART/Muni Montgomery St. Station
M
Stockton St.
Post St.
Stevenson St.
Union Square
Maiden Ln.
29
Jessie St.
Geary St.
New Montgomery St.
2nd St.
O'Farrell St.
Jessie St.
Stevenson St.
SoMA (SOUTH OF MARKET)
Market St.
28
3rd St.
Yerba Buena Lane
Minna St.
Natoma St.
27
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Mission St.
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
25
Howard St.
Hawthorne St.
26
Jessie St.
4th St.
Yerba Buena Gardens
Westfield San Francisco (Shopping Center)
Metreon
Moscone Center North
24
5th St.
Moscone Center West
Moscone Center South
California Cable Car Line
Powell-Mason and Powell-Hyde Cable Car Lines
BART/Muni
One Way

Taking the Night Off

See the "Fast Facts" appendix at the end of this book for information on hiring babysitters. When a hotel says it provides babysitting, it really means it has a list of recommended agencies that provide bonded, screened caregivers. It's up to you to make the arrangements, which ideally should be done in advance.

JW Marriott Hotel San Francisco ★ The JW Marriott has two key things going for it. First off, rooms are big; deluxe rooms with two double beds have 400 square feet of space—enough for a whole family *and* its luggage. Second, when conventions aren't in town, you can often get them at a steep discount—down from $359 to $199. Not bad for accommodations with the perks of a top-tier hotel, including luxe bathrooms (think deep-soaking tubs, separate showers, and gleaming marble), LCD TVs, and city views from the higher rooms. Imagine this: you ask for a corner room with king-size bed, which is more spacious and light-filled than regular rooms with a king-size bed, but costs the same. Then you interconnect to a room with two double beds. At off-peak times, that's a sweet setup at a luxury hotel for $400 and change. In fact, the rooms with king-size bed alone are so spacious (corner or not) that you could add a rollaway and a crib, and still won't trip over luggage on a nighttime trip to the bathroom.

There's no doubt the JW Marriott is big. The walk from the elevator to your room—with kids tired after a day of sightseeing—can be long. But at least the walk borders an impressive, 18-story atrium. From the lobby, the hotel's uninhibited architecture is further enhanced by bold red furniture, an elegant, modern fireplace, and a towering sculpture of ladies dancing around a fountain. Guest room decor, which was newly redone in 2008, is uninspired, but that's a trivial matter when you consider the value for money if you time your visit well (for example, when there aren't many business travelers in town). Only in the hotel's 800-square-foot Pacific suites is the carpeting just too much: The dizzying circles look better suited to a hotel on the Vegas strip. Those suites, with a room with king-size bed and a separate living room with a sofa (not all are sleeper sofas) normally go for $1,000, but can be had for half that if occupancy is low. Another option are the one-room junior suites, where you can add two rollaways if you want.

500 Post St. (at Mason St.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/605-6568** or 415/771-8600. Fax 415/398-0267. www.jwmarriottunionsquare.com. 337 units, including 8 suites, all non-smoking. $299–$499 double; from $670 suite. Kids under 12 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways at varying prices; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $42; oversized vehicles $48. **Amenities:** Restaurant; fitness center; concierge; business center; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV, dataport, high-speed Internet access, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player.

EXPENSIVE

Galleria Park Hotel Closer to the financial district than other hotels in the Union Square vicinity, this small, luxury property is quieter at night than many other downtown hotels. Setting it apart from its competitors are a unique rooftop jogging track/garden that offers an out-of-the-way spot to let off some steam and an easy-access paking garage underneath the hotel. If you have a car and need it quickly, the valet won't have to hike a few blocks to fetch it. Beyond proximity to several convenient, casual eateries, the hotel was slated to open its own restaurant in January 2009, which will offer "California fresh" cuisine using local, organic, and seasonal ingredients.

Purchased by the Joie de Vivre hotel chain and completely remodeled in 2007, the hotel boasts vibrant, inviting Art Deco decor reminiscent of the glamorous 1920s and '30s. Guest rooms, with playful green walls accented by luscious slate-gray taffeta curtains, are not especially large in this 1911 building. Bathrooms also completely lack counter space. But the bold interior design, Frette linens, bathrobes, very friendly staff, flatscreen TVs, and other perks make up for the small- to moderately sized rooms. The hotel has 14 "junior suites," really just somewhat larger rooms with a king-size bed and a pullout sleeper sofa. Rates for these are usually in the high $200s, while two-room suites can go for more than $400. Rooms with two double beds are usually just under $200. Because it's a business-oriented hotel, you'll find the best deals on weekends, where prices can be slashed up to 40%.

191 Sutter St. (at Kearny St.), San Francisco, CA 94104. ✆ **800/792-9639** or 415/781-3060. Fax 415/433-4409. www.galleriapark.com. 177 units, including 15 suites. $139–$259 double; $199–$599 suite. Kids under 12 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $20; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $35; oversized vehicles $48. **Amenities:** Restaurant; exercise room; concierge; room service (5–9pm; 24 hr. room service to begin in 2009); babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV, dataport, free wireless high-speed Internet access, minibar, fridge, hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player, iPod dock.

Hotel Monaco ★ A star in the Kimpton hotel chain, this refurbished 1910 landmark is a refreshing change from other high-end hotels. The Art Deco decor in the impressive lobby is vibrant and festive, and sure to please any child who sees it. Kids will also love the freshly baked cookies at the front desk and the pet goldfish that keeps them company in their hotel room (on request). This property is so pet-friendly it offers special packages for pooches, and guests actually check in with dogs more regularly than with children. Parents will like the complimentary wine and cheese reception in the lobby daily at 5pm. Dining options are the Grand Cafe (p. 107), inside a beautifully restored turn-of-the-20th-century ballroom, and the Petit Cafe, with simpler fare more suited for kids. Adults can take turns pretending they're at a resort at the newly renovated spa and health club on the bottom floor. If you're flying, check to see if the house car is available to take you to the airport; the cost is about the same as a taxi.

The vividly designed rooms and bathrooms are larger than those at the Serrano down the block; the doubles here are just spacious enough for a crib. Suites come with a very large bathroom, sofa bed in the living room, a VCR, and two televisions.

501 Geary St. (at Taylor St.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/214-4220** or 415/292-0100. Fax 415/292-0111. www.monaco-sf.com. 201 units, including 35 suites. $229–$409 double; $379–$649 suite. Kids under 17 stay free in parent's room. No rollaways; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $39; oversized vehicles $45. Pets welcome. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; health club; spa; concierge; courtesy car; business center; 24-hr. room service; in-room massage; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD and games, dataport, free wireless high-speed Internet access, minibar, fridge, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player.

Hotel Triton ★★ You'll score big points with your pre-teens or teenagers at this rock 'n' roll–themed boutique hotel. Staffed by creative types wearing studded leather belts or hipster outfits, this may be the zaniest property in the colorful Kimpton chain. The fantastical lobby decor is rivaled only by the groovy tunes spun by the hotel staff, and suites have been designed by the likes of Carlos Santana, Jerry Garcia, and Woody Harrelson. The eco-friendly hotel uses biodegradable cleaning products, recycles as much paper as possible, and even serves organic coffee. That coffee is served with biscotti lobby-side in the morning, while in the evenings a DJ often provides music to accompany the daily free wine and beer hour.

Making the Most of the Concierge

Nearly all upscale hotels have concierges, and many smaller inns offer concierge services from the front desk. Too often, these people go underutilized by guests who don't know the full range of services concierges can provide. Beyond merely giving directions to Fisherman's Wharf, concierges are there to act as guests' problem solvers. The best ones take real pleasure in helping, and the more challenging the request, the better. When you're on vacation, why not truly relax, and let the concierge be your personal assistant during your stay?

- **House cars:** Upper-end hotels often have house cars available to drop off guests in the Financial District or elsewhere within 2 to 5 miles of the hotel. Businesspeople use the service most, but any guest can enjoy this perk. If you want to take the kids to AT&T Park to watch some baseball, or you need a ride to a restaurant, request a house car through the concierge desk. There's usually no charge, but you may tip the driver at your discretion.
- **Restaurants:** Every concierge will make dinner reservations for guests, and I recommend having the concierge phone ahead no matter where you are dining. If a restaurant is booked, the concierge may have more pull squeezing you in than you would on your own. But don't ask the concierge for any old restaurant recommendation. (I've been to some unremarkable, touristy places that way.) It's more effective to name two or three options and have the concierge tell you more about each one.
- **Other services:** You needn't limit requests to restaurant reservations. Concierges can also book Alcatraz or other cruises, car rentals, or even spa treatments—whatever requires a phone call. They can buy tickets to a sporting or entertainment venue or amend airline reservations.
- **Solutions:** Did a child get sick? Head right to the concierge, who will make it a personal mission to ensure a doctor sees your kid as soon as possible. Concierges will also oblige less urgent requests, like reserving doggy day care or finding a last-minute gift. You don't even have to be checked into the hotel. You can fax and e-mail the concierge with your arrival date and particular request. If he or she does go beyond the call of duty, gratuities are always appreciated—although never expected.

Of course there's a catch: The whimsical rooms and bathrooms are teensy. Because interconnecting rooms are not available, families have the choice of occupying two separate rooms, squeezing into a double-double, or reserving a suite. Although kids may love to stay in the Red Hot Chili Peppers suite, be aware that most suites are actually one-room studios with a king-size bed and a queen-size sleeper sofa. Of course, the diminutive size may be worth it if your child is fortunate enough to share an elevator ride with one of the many bands that often stay at the hotel.

342 Grant Ave. (at Bush St.), San Francisco, CA 94108. ✆ **800/800-1299** or 415/394-0500. Fax 415/394-0555. www.hoteltriton.com. 140 units, including 7 suites. $109–$149 double; suites from $269. Kids under 12 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $13; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $38. Pets

welcome. **Amenities:** Exercise room; concierge; business center; room service (limited hours); laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD and games, free wireless high-speed Internet access, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, CD player, iPod available.

The Inn at Union Square This diminutive hotel primarily serves business travelers but is worth considering for its competitive rates and location just 1 block from Union Square. The bright and airy rooms come mainly with king-size and queen-size beds, although there is one room with two double beds. There are no adjoining rooms, but the more spacious rooms can comfortably fit a rollaway, and suites with pullout sofa beds are also available. Every floor (except the second) has a separate clubroom featuring complimentary breakfast in the mornings, wine and appetizers in the evenings, and hot tea and cookies after 8pm. The clubrooms also have fridges for guests' use. Gym passes are also available. Concierge services are available from the front desk. In all, the hotel's small size makes for an intimate feel and personalized service, which must be why satisfied guests return again and again.

440 Post St. (btw. Mason and Powell sts.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/288-4346** or 415/397-3510. Fax 415/989-0529. www.unionsquare.com. 30 units, including 11 suites. $239–$249 singles only; $269–$329 suite. Kids under 14 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $25; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $36; oversized vehicles $41; self-parking $25. **Amenities:** Laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* TV, dataport, CD player, wireless high-speed Internet access, hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player.

The Orchard Garden Hotel ★★ The first hotel in California hotel to receive LEED-NC certification (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design for New Construction) from the U.S. Green Building Council, the Orchard Garden followed opened after its sister property, the Orchard Hotel, earned a steady, satisfied clientele for its efficiency, pleasant decor, comfortable beds, and environmental friendliness. The Orchard Garden shares these same qualities, with rooms that are slightly more stylish in blond wood and soothing earth tones. Although it's priced slightly higher than its sister hotel, the Orchard Garden has more family-friendly room configurations—including junior suites, with a king-size bed and sleeper sofa in one room, that go for more than $400 during convention season, but can be had for $229 in the off-peak. A full breakfast can be included for an additional $20 to the room rate.

466 Bush St. (at Grant Ave.), San Francisco, CA 94108. ✆ **888/717-2881** or 415/399-9807. Fax 415/393-9917. www.theorchardgardenhotel.com. 86 units, including 9 suites. $199–$339 double; $349–$489 suite. Rollaways $25; cribs $10. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $40. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; concierge; courtesy car; room service (limited hours); laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, dataport, free high-speed Internet access, fridge, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, CD player, iPod alarm clock.

The Orchard Hotel ★ This is one of the few downtown boutique hotels constructed as an entirely new building (in 2000). That means you get spacious rooms compared to other nearby hotels in this price category, large bathrooms with separate showers and tubs, and nicely soundproofed walls. Since each floor has few rooms, and therefore less foot traffic, the hotel says the only noise you're likely to hear is the occasional ring of the cable car bell. The still-new decor has an Art Deco touch with plenty of wood and muted colors. Only the waterfall-type fountain in the lobby seems out of place. Funky fountains aside, pluses at the Orchard include complete entertainment centers in every room, free DVDs, complimentary "Euro-continental" breakfast (the "Euro" part means cheeses and cold cuts are served alongside the freshly baked pastries), and Aveda products. Should you find the platform beds too firm, you can request a pillow-top mattress cover. Finally, the hotel is one of a handful of San Francisco hotels that have earned a "Green Seal of

Approval" for environmental design, use of biodegradable cleaning products, and other eco-friendly touches. The major drawback is that the Orchard was originally envisioned as a business hotel, so rooms are designed for two people. If your party includes more than parents and an infant, you'll have to get interconnecting rooms or spring for one of the two-room suites, which have entertainment centers in both rooms and can be had for just $100 more than the lowest-available rate on the standard room. Another option is to look into the Orchard Garden Hotel, listed above.

665 Bush St. (at Stockton St.), San Francisco, CA 94108. ✆ **888/717-2881** or 415/362-8878. Fax 415/362-8088. www.theorchardhotel.com. 104 units, including 9 suites. $179–$439 double; $279–$439 suite. No rollaways; cribs $15. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $34. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; concierge; courtesy car; room service (limited hours); laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD w/movies and games, dataport, free high-speed Internet access, fridge, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, CD player.

Serrano Hotel ★ The Serrano is one of the more family-friendly options in the neighborhood. The richly colored Spanish Revival lobby isn't overwhelmingly large, and cozy seating under a beamed ceiling is arranged in small groups. During the complimentary evening wine reception, a tarot card reader drops by to entertain. As at most Kimpton hotels, one TV channel is dedicated to yoga, and a complimentary yoga basket is available. Guests can borrow games from an extensive game library to play in the lobby or in their rooms. In keeping with the whimsical theme, you'll find yo-yos, mini Etch A Sketches, and cards, all for a fee, in the minibars. Another unique perk for young families are complimentary strollers and booster seats. Check the website for family and pet packages.

The building dates from the 1920s, although it was entirely renovated in 1999. Rooms are lushly designed with warm colors and patterns, double-paned windows, and small, well-stocked bathrooms. Double-doubles are too small for a family of four. Instead, consider a queen deluxe with a connecting double-double (best for large families); an executive king with a bed, sofa bed, and large marble bathroom; or a suite. The suites have a king-size bed and king-size sofa bed, each in its own room. Corner rooms have views and are a bit more spacious. The hotel's Ponzu restaurant serves breakfast and tasty Asian-inspired dinner dishes.

405 Taylor St. (at O'Farrell St.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **866/289-6561** or 415/885-2500. Fax 415/474-4879. www.serranohotel.com. 236 units, including 129 suites. $159–$299 double; $279–$499 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. No rollaways; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $40 oversized vehicles $49. Pets welcome. **Amenities:** Restaurant; exercise room and sauna; business center; room service (limited hours); babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV w/movies and games, dataport, free high-speed Internet access, minibar/fridge, hair dryer, iron, laptop-size safe, iPod dock.

Sir Francis Drake If you can snag a great deal at this historic hotel, it's an option worth considering. But if you can't find a room rate well below the advertised rack rates, I wouldn't recommend it. Certainly, the 1928 hotel is in a premier location by Union Square and on the cable car line. The Harry Denton Starlight Lounge on the top floor is legendary, only slightly less famous than the hotel's beefeater-clad doormen. (Tom Sweeney, who has been opening doors to guests for more than a quarter-century, is a verifiable San Francisco icon.) And the grandiose, chandelier-lit lobby, complete with a sweeping marble staircase, offers a majestic taste of the Old World.

Unfortunately, many of the colorfully decorated rooms are small, and the bathrooms even tinier, with hardly any counter space. But if you don't mind forgoing queen-size beds, the executive double-double rooms are relatively spacious and have a bonus second

bathroom. They can be had for $199, if you search the Kimpton website for specials. There are some interconnecting rooms as well. Unlike at other Kimpton properties, you will find neither complimentary morning coffee nor afternoon wine in the lobby, but the hotel does have two good restaurants on site: Caffe Espresso and Scala's Bistro. The view is better and the street noise less audible on the upper floors.

450 Powell St. (at Sutter St.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/795-7129** or 415/392-7755. Fax 415/391-8719. www.sirfrancisdrake.com. 417 units, including 4 parlor suites and 1 presidential suite. $239–$319 double. Suites from $599. Kids 18 and under stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $20; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $45; oversized vehicles $50. Pets welcome. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; lounge; exercise room; concierge; business center; room service (limited hours); babysitting; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD w/movies and games, dataport, wireless high-speed Internet access, minibar/fridge, hair dryer, iron.

Westin St. Francis Overrated The historic St. Francis Hotel, a survivor of the 1906 earthquake, is a veritable hubbub of activity. With its location just across from Union Square and steps away from serious shopping, downtown theaters, and the cable cars, the hotel's expansive lobby has always been a convenient meeting place for tourists, walking tours, friends taking tea, and the occasional elementary school group on a field trip to ride the glass elevators to the 27th floor. Travelers under 12 receive Westin Kids Club backpacks with age-appropriate promotional items like light socket covers and sippy cups. Rooms are outfitted with comfortable "Heavenly Bed" and "Heavenly Bath" and good linens.

Despite its size, perpetually crowded lobby, and, quite frankly, impersonal feel, the hotel's prime location on Union Square seems to make it very popular. If high energy, location, and the historical aspects intrigue you, here's some advice: Phone in-house reservations and be as specific as possible about your needs. Prices can fluctuate wildly due to the many room configurations, some less desirable than others. Standard queen rooms are barely large enough for two. Traditional queen rooms have more space, and can accommodate a crib or rollaway. The deluxe double-doubles are very spacious with renovated bathrooms, and the Grandview rooms have smarter decor. Ask for a view or a corner room if you want natural light and avoid rooms by the ever-busy elevators. Hallways go on forever. If your child has forgotten his sweatshirt, you'll have to go back to the room with him unless he's outfitted with a compass and a map.

335 Powell St. (at Geary St.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/WESTIN-1** (937-8461) or 415/397-7000. Fax 415/774-0124. www.westin.com. 1,195 units. $149–$569 double; $250–$5,000 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways and cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $45; oversized vehicles $52. Small dogs welcome. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 2 bars; health club; concierge; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; massage; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV, dataport, high-speed Internet access, minibar, hair dryer, iron, safe.

MODERATE

Chancellor Hotel Across the street from Saks Fifth Avenue and less than a block from Union Square, the Chancellor, built in 1914, is a typical old-time San Francisco hotel. The rooms are small and the furnishings are very basic, although in some rooms the back wall is painted in an unusually bright hue. But the prime location makes this place worth looking into, as do nice touches such as coffee, apples, and cookies at the reception desk; a pleasant staff; free local calls; and a pillow menu with selections such as firm, soft, hypoallergenic, down, and even snore-reducing (useful when sharing rooms). Rooms come with one queen-size bed or two twin beds, and interconnecting rooms are available. The hotel has two suites, each with a double bed and pullout sofa. From

higher-floor, street-side bedrooms ending in 00 through 05, you'll have views of the cable cars and Union Square. Bathrooms are moderately sized, and each tub comes with its own rubber ducky.

The in-house restaurant, Luques, serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Older kids will appreciate the free high-speed Internet access available in the lobby. Check the website or call the hotel about special package rates, which can be much lower than published rates.

433 Powell St. (btw. Post and Sutter sts.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/428-4748** or 415/362-2004. Fax 415/362-1403. www.chancellorhotel.com. 137 units, including 2 suites. $175 double; $230–$300 suite. No rollaways; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $28; oversized vehicles $32; self-parking $22. **Amenities:** Restaurant; concierge; room service (7am–10pm); laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* TV w/movies, dataport, high-speed Internet access, fridge (on request), hair dryer, iron, safe.

Donatello Value An unfortunate product of 1970s architecture, the Donatello is rather unsightly on the outside. Not to worry: The weathered concrete facade is a small price to pay for one of the best family deals in the area. Operated by a timeshare company, the Donatello offers some rare perks for a Union Square hotel in its price range. First off, all the beds are king-size. Second, many rooms have pullout sofas that sleep an extra two family members—even if the sofa beds do take up most of the space in the room once they're open. Third, the rooms have partial kitchenettes, complete with a mini refrigerator, microwave, toaster, sink, and tableware. Finally, a complimentary continental breakfast is served in the club room upstairs.

Add to that a friendly in-house staff, new carpet laid down in 2006, new beds in 2008, big counters and tubs in the bathrooms, sizable closets, and complimentary coffee/tea/hot chocolate, and you've got yourself a deal. And I shouldn't fail to mention the fitness center with men's and ladies' saunas and a coed Jacuzzi, plus a separately managed restaurant on the second floor.

501 Post St. (at Mason St.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **866/729-7182** or 415/441-7100. Fax 415/885-8842. www.shellhospitality.com. 142 units (all are studio suites with king beds and sleep sofas). $209–$295. Rollaways and cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $20 plus tax or $6/hr. with in-and-out privileges. **Amenities:** Restaurant; health club; Jacuzzi; sauna; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, dataport, high-speed Internet access, fridge, kitchenette, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player.

Handlery Union Square ★ Value A family-owned and -operated hotel for more than 60 years, the all nonsmoking Handlery is notable for being the only downtown hotel with an outdoor, heated pool. The pool isn't huge, but it's hugely popular—especially after 4pm when guests return from a day of sightseeing or shopping. The Handlery is also so close to Union Square's central plaza that you can see it from the front door. With its pool and location, no wonder the lobby is always packed. Moreover, bedding, curtains, and other "soft goods" were replaced in late 2008. The red-accented beige designs are simple and pleasant, and new furnishings are expected in late 2009. Guest rooms and bathrooms in the historic, 1908 Geary Street building are small—the king-size-bedded standards have just enough room for a crib. That said, the family suites, ranging from $245 to $399, are an excellent option for large families. There, a queen-size bed, two double-doubles, and a sofa bed accommodate a total of six sleepyheads.

For standard rooms, it's worth the long walk from the lobby to the Club Rooms on the O'Farrell Street side, where rooms are larger and include a dressing area, robes, and extra amenities. (There's a hotel entry on O'Farrell St. as well.) Many of the Club Rooms, which aren't much more expensive than those in the historic section, overlook the tiled

pool deck, where guests gather in the late afternoon for a refreshing dip after a day of shopping or sightseeing. Connecting rooms are available, as are rooms with two queen-size beds. Club Rooms also have sleeper sofas for added value, and rollaways are only $10. The Daily Grill, the hotel's on-site restaurant serving American comfort food, is overpriced. Since you'll be right downtown, you can find better food close by.

351 Geary St. (btw. Powell and Mason sts.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/843-4343** or 415/781-7800. Fax 415/781-0216. www.handlery.com. 377 units. $199–$289 double; $349–$759 suite. Kids under 14 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $10; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $44; oversized vehicles $50. **Amenities:** Restaurant; pool; sauna; concierge; barbershop; gift shop; room service (7am–10pm); babysitting (arranged through concierge); laundry service; dry cleaning; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, dataport (in club rooms), high-speed wireless access ($9.95/day), coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe.

Hotel AbRi The Larkspur Hotel group took over the Jeffersonian-styled Monticello Hotel and reopened it in late 2008 with modern, somewhat masculine, decor. Gone are the festive blue hues of old, replaced by staid beige and brown tones. Wall art, which had not arrived when I visited, will hopefully liven things up a bit. At least the interiors are spanking new. Beyond that, the hotel offers several two-bedroom suites with king-size beds in one room and pullout sofa sleepers in the other. In its early weeks the hotel was offering promotional rates of $229 for the suites, but that number is expected to reach $349/night. The standard rooms with king-size beds will be priced from $229 to $309, which is less of a bargain, since rollaways aren't allowed. However, the AbRi does have eight rooms with two double beds. It claims those double beds, and indeed all of its beds, are the comfiest in town, featuring feather mattress pads, feather duvets, and, of course, feather pillows.

Bathrooms have decent-sized counter space and half have bathtubs. Some suites even have two sinks. AbRi uses all-natural cleaning products and serves free organic coffee in the morning. The restaurant connected to the building, Puccini & Panetti (p. 108), has a special children's menu, coloring books, and enough pizza and pasta dishes to calm any hunger pangs. Along with lunch, dinner, and takeout, the restaurant also provides room service from 11:30am to 10pm. A parking lot a half-block away will allow you to avoid the hefty valet parking fee.

127 Ellis St. (btw. Powell and Mason sts.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **866/778-6169** or 415/392-8800. Fax 415/398-2650. www.monticelloinn.com. 91 units, including 28 suites. $209 double; $249–$359 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. No rollaways; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $43; oversized vehicles $53. **Amenities:** Restaurant; concierge; room service (limited hours); laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, dataport, complimentary wireless Internet access, minibar, coffeemaker (on request), hair dryer, iron, safe, iPod dock.

Hotel Adagio ★ (Value) The Hotel Adagio is one of the better values in Union Square. Inspired by the color scheme of the original 1929 Spanish Revivalist decor, the hotel's modern furnishings come in pleasing shades of burnt sienna, orange, and chocolate brown. Guest rooms are more spacious than in most historic buildings, and the bathroom fixtures have been completely updated as well. Although bathroom counter space is limited, it is more generous than at other downtown hotels in this price range. Moreover, guest rooms come equipped with two phone lines (one cordless), flatscreen TVs, and spacious closets.

If you go for two interconnecting rooms (rooms ending in 04 and 05—a double-double and a room with king-size bed), this hotel ends up in the expensive category for a family of four. But the rooms with two queen-size beds, of which there are 25 in the hotel, are quite spacious and can comfortably fit four people, with plenty of floor space

left over for luggage. In addition, the "junior suites," which are really one big room, combine a king-size bed and a queen-size pullout sofa bed. Some of the junior suites also have bigger bathrooms with even more counter space.

The exercise room is spacious and well-equipped, and the business center has free high-speed wireless Internet access, as do all the guest rooms. The lobby serves complimentary coffee in the morning and lemonade and cookies in the afternoon. Although the on-site restaurant, Cortez, is excellent, it's not ideal for a family meal.

550 Geary St. (btw. Taylor and Jones sts.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/228-8830** or 415/775-5000. Fax 415/775-9388. www.thehoteladagio.com. 171 units, including 2 penthouse suites. From $169 double; from $329 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways and cribs $20. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $39; oversized vehicles up to $75. **Amenities:** Restaurant; exercise room; courtesy car; business center; room service (limited hours); massage (in-room); babysitting; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning; executive-level rooms. *In room:* Portable A/C, TV w/movies and video games, dataport, free high-speed Internet access, minibar/fridge, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player, iPod dock.

Hotel Bijou Movie-loving families can check out the 10-seat screening room, "Le Petit Theatre Bijou," off the hotel lobby. A double bill of films shot in San Francisco plays every evening at 7 and 9:30pm. The hotel will also feature kids' movies on request at other times of the day. There's even a candy counter at the front desk, and coffee available any time of day.

The Joie de Vivre hotel group livened up this 1911 building with plenty of vibrant paint: think burgundy, yellow, and purple. But the guest rooms, named after locally made films, remain tiny, and the bathrooms are especially small. Given its location on a less savory section of Mason Street, the Bijou is best left to experienced travelers with savvy kids who want an inexpensive, but fun, hotel.

111 Mason St. (at Eddy St.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/771-1022** or 415/771-1200. Fax 415/346-3196. www.hotelbijou.com. 65 units. $129–$179 double. Kids 12 and under stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $15; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $28; oversized vehicles $35. **Amenities:** Continental breakfast; concierge; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* TV, dataport, wireless high speed internet hair dryer, iron.

Hotel Metropolis The Metropolis is the only hotel in San Francisco that boasts a suite just for kids. Designed by the hotel's president, who is also a mother, the kids' room of the suite has a bunk bed, a child-size desk, a huge chalkboard, and loads of toys. A bedroom for parents is connected to this miniature play land, as is a living room that can accommodate the nanny or more siblings. The suite is frequently booked and the hotel is considering adding another. If you can't get the suite, ask if any of the interconnecting doubles are available; more adventurous kids may prefer staying in a guest room that actually feels like a hotel, rather than another IKEA-furnished kid's room. All rooms are compact and the bathrooms tiny, but the decor is light and fresh. You'll find free coffee in the mornings and a complimentary wine reception Fridays and Saturdays from 4 to 6pm.

Unfortunately, the hotel is located at the south end of Mason Street, on one of the grittier blocks around Union Square, and I might feel uncomfortable returning late in the evening (although a security guard is on duty overnight and the reception desk is staffed 24 hr.). Even 1 block north is an improvement, so just use caution and consider taking a cab if you're out late.

25 Mason St. (btw. Eddy and Turk sts.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/553-1900** or 415/775-4600. Fax 415/775-4606. www.hotelmetropolis.com. 105 units, including 6 suites. $99–$200 double; from $250 suite. Kids under 17 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $10; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking

$30, oversized vehicles $36. **Amenities:** Exercise room; meditation room; business center; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* TV w/movies and video games (DVD in some rooms), fax, free wireless Internet access, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron.

Larkspur Hotel When the Larkspur hotel group took over once-named Cartwright Hotel in 2007, they added an old-fashioned bar in the lobby, complete with leather seats and dark wood, naming it "1915" for the year the hotel was built. The old-time theme extends to the redecorated guest rooms, where you'll find chocolate-brown leather headboards and stately, if somewhat staid, earth-toned furnishings. In keeping with the architectural priorities of a near century ago, the guest rooms are rather petite and the bathrooms truly tiny. While some closets are teensy, others are mysteriously large. You won't find any views out your window, but you are just far enough away from the cable car lines not to hear every bell and whirr.

Despite the tiny room size, rollaways are permitted in the larger rooms, which go for $189 and up. The suites, with a king-size bed in one room, a pullout sofa sleeper in the other, and a wee bathroom in between them, start at about $269. The Larkspur uses only environmentally friendly cleaning products in this non-smoking hotel and proudly serves complimentary organic, locally roasted coffee in the mornings. The kids will enjoy the freshly baked cookies in the evenings. Pets are welcome free of charge, and dog biscuits are available anytime in the lobby. Depending on the time of year, be sure to ask for a room with an air-conditioning unit. Location-wise, the hotel gets extra points. It's just north of Union Square, 3 blocks from the Chinatown Gate, and close to the cable car lines. If you can snag a good rate, and don't mind close quarters, you might appreciate the Larkspur's historic feel.

524 Sutter St. (near Powell St.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/919-9779** or 415/421-2865. Fax 415/398-6345. www.cartwrighthotel.com. 114 units, including 5 suites. $109–$259 double; $199–$369 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways (limited availability) $25; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $40; self-parking $27. Pets welcome. **Amenities:** Bar; health club; room service (limited hours). *In room:* A/C (not all rooms), TV, free wireless Internet access, coffeemakers, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, CD player.

INEXPENSIVE

Golden Gate Hotel This charming 1913 Edwardian bed-and-breakfast sits on a relatively quiet block, close to the cable car lines and within walking distance of Nob Hill, Union Square, and Chinatown. The cozy rooms, decorated with white wicker furniture, antique bureaus, and floral prints, have either two twin beds or one queen and space for little else. At most, you could squeeze a crib into the queen room. Families often choose from one of the two downstairs rooms, which share a common bathroom. One room has two double beds, and the other has a double and a twin. Families of four stay for $125 in summer and less in the off-season. Another off-season bargain is a room with a queen-size bed that connects to a tiny room with two twin beds—all for as little as $180. (In summer, the rate is much higher.) The queen room has a bath, and there are additional shared tubs and toilets in the hall.

Innkeepers John and Renate Kenaste, and daughter Gabriele, are polite hosts who maintain some nice touches in their family-run inn such as vintage claw-foot tubs, an antique bird-cage elevator, and complimentary afternoon tea with homemade cookies. The continental breakfast included in the room rate features coffee, tea, croissants, and muffins. There's also Humphrey, a friendly golden retriever. ***Note:*** During peak months in summer, rates push the Golden Gate into the moderate price category.

775 Bush St. (btw. Powell and Mason sts.), San Francisco, CA 94108. ✆ **800/835-1118** or 415/392-3702. Fax 415/392-6202. www.goldengatehotel.com. 25 units, some w/shared bathrooms. Rooms w/shared bath $105 double; rooms w/private bath $165 double/queen. Rates include continental breakfast. Futon $30; cribs free. AE, DC, MC, V. Self-parking $22. *In room:* TV, free wireless Internet access, hair dryer, iron (on request).

Halcyon Hotel Penny pinchers will appreciate this clean, low-key option only a few blocks from Union Square. Here you'll find rock-bottom rates; kitchenettes in every room equipped with a toaster, microwave, coffeemaker with complimentary coffee, and a small fridge; coin-operated laundry facilities with free detergent and bleach; and a friendly general manager by the name of Dennis Hale who truly wants to ensure your stay in San Francisco is a good one. The carpets in the tiny guest rooms were recently replaced with pleasant laminated flooring in a pale pine style and the hallway floors were also due to be replaced by early 2007. The guest room walls were also slated for painting when this book went to press, something they sorely needed. The mattresses, bedspreads, and furniture could also use replacing, but for these low rates near Union Square, perhaps that's too much to ask. Room configurations vary; one family option is a twin bed bunked over a double bed. The hotel says that, technically, it permits no more than three guests in a room, but does offer a complimentary floor futon "for emergencies." If anyone in your group has physical limitations, you may want to think twice before booking here, as the hotel is located uphill from Union Square, and once inside, you'll have to take the stairs. If you have cats or dogs, they are welcome to stay for an additional $5 per day.

649 Jones St. (btw. Geary and Post sts.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **800/627-2396** or 415/929-8033. Fax 415/441-8033. www.halcyonsf.com. 25 units. $79–$129 double; $510–$590 weekly. Minimum length of stay Oct–Apr is 7 days. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways and cribs $10. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $14–$16. **Amenities:** Access to nearby health club; concierge; tour desk; laundry facilities; free fax in lobby. *In room:* TV (DVD player available for $10), kitchen, fridge, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe.

Hostelling International San Francisco–Downtown For less than $30 per person, your family can experience dorm life in an old San Francisco–style building right in the heart of Union Square. Occupying five sparsely decorated floors, rooms here are simple and clean. Each has two or three bunk beds with linens, a sink, a closet, and lockers (bring your own locks or buy some at the front desk). Although most private rooms share hallway bathrooms, a few have private facilities. Prices are per person in the dorm rooms and per double bed in the private room. Since kids under 12 are an additional $14 per night, the hostel option becomes less of a deal when you add more than one child. Among several common rooms is a large kitchen-style room with refrigerator space, toasters, and a microwave, but no stoves or ranges.

312 Mason St. (btw. Geary and O'Farrell sts.), San Francisco, CA 94102. ✆ **888/GOHIUSA** (464-4872) or 415/788-5604. Fax 415/788-3023. www.sfhostels.com. 105 units (39 private, 241 dorm beds). Hostelling members $24–$29 per person in dorm; nonmembers $27–$32 per person in dorm; $60–$89 in private room w/shared bath; $77–$95 in private room w/private bath. No child rate. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** TV lounge; full kitchen; Internet access at kiosk for small fee; free wireless Internet access; laundry facilities. *In room:* Lockers, no phone.

Hotel Beresford Arms ★ This old-fashioned lodging is a true value proposition for families of four and up. A family-owned hotel with heavy burgundy lobby decor and slightly scuffed guest room furniture, the Beresford Arms is not going to win any awards for style. But spacious room configurations, most with kitchens or kitchenettes; friendly staff; and low rates do keep some customers coming back. All rooms have queen-size beds, so here a double-double room actually has two queen-size beds, meaning four

of you can share a room pretty comfortably. Moreover, rooms are big enough to fit your luggage and still leave you space to walk. Finally, the bathrooms may have outdated decor, but they are large enough to accommodate a few people trying to get their teeth brushed and hair combed at the same time. The 60 "Jacuzzi" suites all feature Jacuzzi tubs, and half have full kitchens, while the other half have kitchenettes with no stove. All have refrigerators, which come stocked with minibar items. There's also a small grocery store across the street for other items you may need. At breakfast time, you'll find coffee, pastries, and fresh fruit in the lobby, where you can also enjoy free Wi-Fi. Cats and dogs are welcome, but usually only in the smoking rooms.

701 Post St. (at Jones St.), San Francisco, CA 94109. ✆ **800/533-6533** or 415/673-2600. Fax 415/929-1535. www.beresford.com/arms. 95 units. $119–$129 double; $140–$159 Jacuzzi suite. Kids under 12 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $15; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $24, oversized vehicles $35. **Amenities:** Access to nearby health club ($10/day); laundry services; free Internet access in lobby. *In room:* TV/VCR, dataport, minibar, hair dryer (upon request), iron.

Hotel des Arts This may be the only place downtown where you can find both a hip vibe and a room with queen-size bed for under $100. The key to the hipness—besides front desk personnel donning cool duds and funky glasses—are a few pieces of sleek furniture combined with the contributions of several emerging artists. Your kids will be impressed by the lobby and hallways, which are essentially gallery spaces jampacked with artwork. The permanent works are displayed in the many painted guest rooms, where the walls are literally covered in ambitious and unrestrained paintings. Some room art may be inappropriate for kids, so please tell the staff whether little ones will be in your group. (You should in any case call the hotel to specifically reserve a painted guest room and even to request a particular artist.) One impressive room featuring red and black imagery that may be too bold for young ones is the work of Shepherd Ferry, whose Obama campaign posters have received much attention.

The best configurations for families are the eight suites; half of these have two double beds in one room and the rest have a queen-size bed. The second room in each suite has a pullout full-sized sofa sleeper. All have private bathrooms, but not all have tubs (only showers). All suites have microwaves and small refrigerators, but no air conditioning. Additional pluses include complimentary continental breakfast and a winning location just 2½ blocks from Union Square. But remember: While it may be hip, this is a two-star hotel. Rooms are small and the building is old. At an off-peak rate of $149 the suites are a good deal for downtown San Francisco. But suite prices hit $279 during high occupancy; they aren't worth that much.

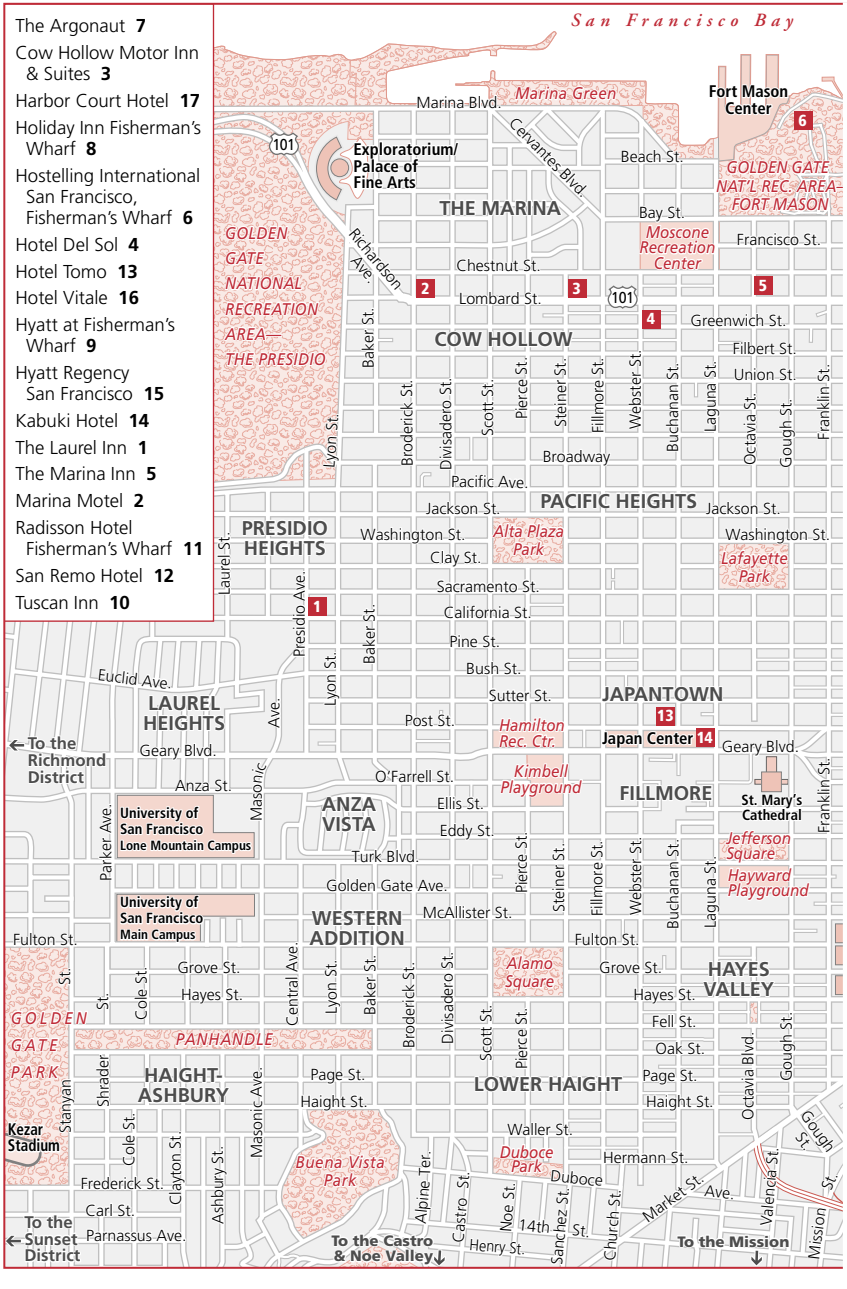
447 Bush St. (btw. Grant and Kearny sts.), San Francisco, CA 94108. ✆ **800/956-4322** or 415/965-3232. Fax 415/956-0399. www.sfhoteldesarts.com. 43 units. $75–$250 double; $110–$279 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. No rollaways; no cribs. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $26. **Amenities:** Concierge, non-smoking rooms. *In room:* TV, complimentary high-speed wireless access, fridge, iron (most rooms).

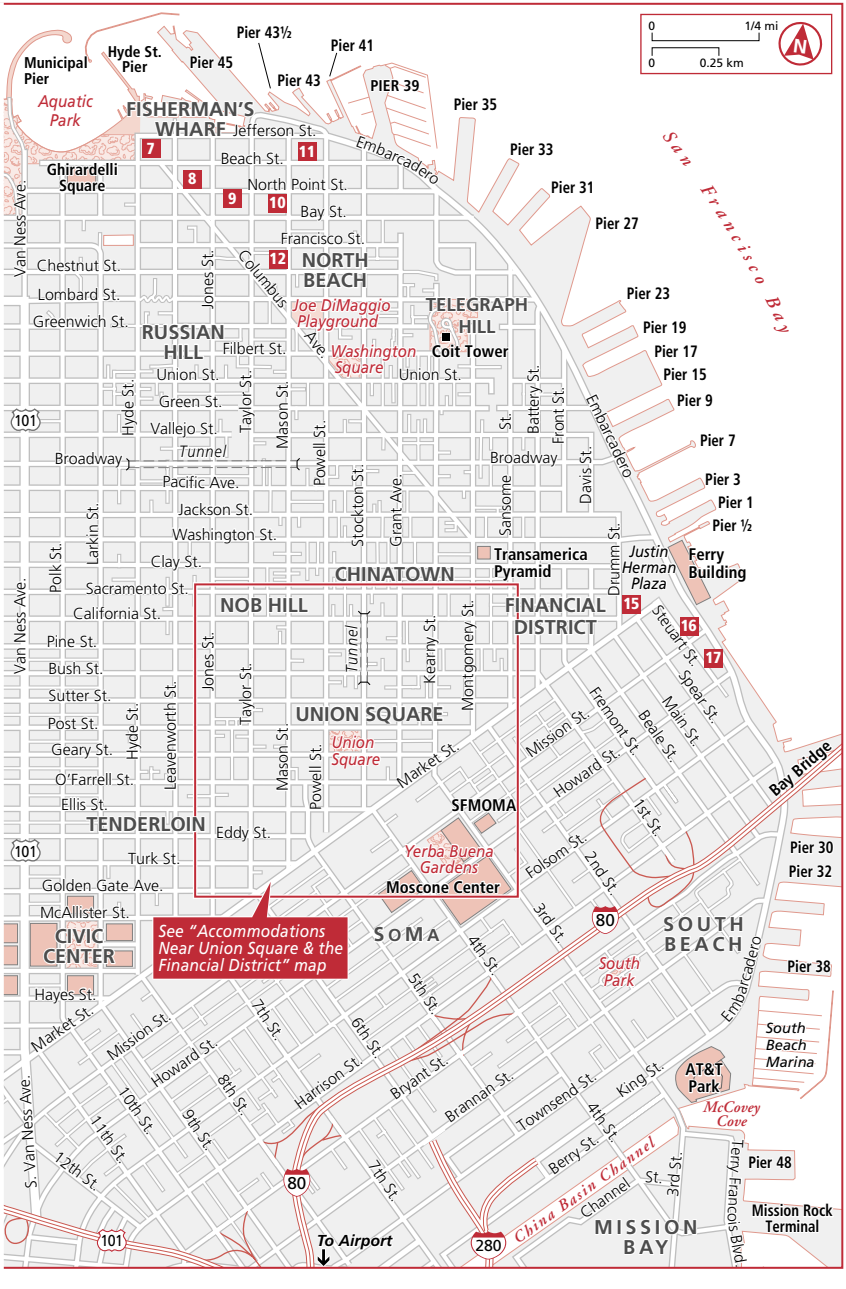
2 SOUTH OF MARKET (SOMA)

Hotels here are close to shopping, museums, and great family entertainment, including the Yerba Buena Center. As an up-and-coming part of town, SoMa enjoys some of the city's newest restaurants and attractions. The downside to the newness is constant construction. Also, some sections of the neighborhood have not yet emerged, and the unsavory 6th and 7th streets should definitely be avoided.

Accommodations Around Town

- The Argonaut **7**
- Cow Hollow Motor Inn & Suites **3**
- Harbor Court Hotel **17**
- Holiday Inn Fisherman's Wharf **8**
- Hostelling International San Francisco, Fisherman's Wharf **6**
- Hotel Del Sol **4**
- Hotel Tomo **13**
- Hotel Vitale **16**
- Hyatt at Fisherman's Wharf **9**
- Hyatt Regency San Francisco **15**
- Kabuki Hotel **14**
- The Laurel Inn **1**
- The Marina Inn **5**
- Marina Motel **2**
- Radisson Hotel Fisherman's Wharf **11**
- San Remo Hotel **12**
- Tuscan Inn **10**




0 1/4 mi
0 0.25 km
Municipal Pier
Aquatic Park
Hyde St. Pier
Pier 45
Pier 43½
Pier 43
Pier 41
PIER 39
Pier 35
Pier 33
Pier 31
Pier 27
Pier 23
Pier 19
Pier 17
Pier 15
Pier 9
Pier 7
Pier 3
Pier 1
Pier ½
San Francisco Bay
FISHERMAN'S WHARF
Jefferson St.
Ghirardelli Square
Beach St.
North Point St.
Bay St.
Francisco St.
Embarcadero
Van Ness Ave.
Chestnut St.
Lombard St.
Greenwich St.
Jones St.
Columbus Ave
NORTH BEACH
Joe DiMaggio Playground
TELEGRAPH HILL
Coit Tower
RUSSIAN HILL
Filbert St.
Washington Square
Union St.
Green St.
Vallejo St.
Broadway
Tunnel
Pacific Ave.
Jackson St.
Washington St.
Clay St.
Sacramento St.
California St.
Pine St.
Bush St.
Sutter St.
Post St.
Geary St.
O'Farrell St.
Ellis St.
Hyde St.
Taylor St.
Mason St.
Powell St.
Stockton St.
Grant Ave.
Battery St.
Front St.
Davis St.
Sansome St.
Drumm St.
Transamerica Pyramid
Justin Herman Plaza
Ferry Building
CHINATOWN
NOB HILL
FINANCIAL DISTRICT
Larkin St.
Polk St.
Leavenworth St.
Kearny St.
Montgomery St.
Tunnel
UNION SQUARE
Union Square
Market St.
Stewart St.
Spear St.
Main St.
Beale St.
Fremont St.
Mission St.
Howard St.
1st St.
Bay Bridge
SFMOMA
Yerba Buena Gardens
Moscone Center
Folsom St.
2nd St.
3rd St.
4th St.
TENDERLOIN
Eddy St.
Turk St.
Golden Gate Ave.
McAllister St.
CIVIC CENTER
Hayes St.
See "Accommodations Near Union Square & the Financial District" map
SOMA
South Park
SOUTH BEACH
Pier 30
Pier 32
Pier 38
Embarcadero
South Beach Marina
AT&T Park
McCovey Cove
King St.
Townsend St.
Brannan St.
Bryant St.
Harrison St.
5th St.
6th St.
7th St.
8th St.
9th St.
10th St.
11th St.
12th St.
Market St.
Mission St.
Howard St.
S. Van Ness Ave.
Berry St.
Channel
3rd St.
Terry Francois Blvd.
Pier 48
Mission Rock Terminal
China Basin Channel
MISSION BAY
To Airport
101
80
280

VERY EXPENSIVE

Four Seasons ★★★ The lobby of this über-luxurious hotel is a sleek, spacious, multi-roomed tribute to Art Deco elegance. The extremely professional concierges will stop at nothing to ensure that every family member's needs are met. Milk and cookies greet kids 6 and under; those 7 and up get root beer and popcorn. Children staying in their own room receive a personal minibar key, entitling them to such goodies as milk, Oreos, and granola bars (and unlike the room rates, these snacks—at a dollar or two apiece—are deliberately inexpensive to keep parents happy). The hotel even supplies bathrobes to fit every member of the family. Parents of infants get a fully outfitted crib, diaper genie, wipes, baby shampoo, and so on.

Each of the tastefully opulent and sizable rooms is outfitted with a Sony PlayStation and CD player. The concierge can also send up a VCR, DVD player, or board games on request. Several interconnecting rooms, such as a room with king-size bed and a room with double queen-size beds, are available. The junior suites feature a room with king-size bed and living room with a foldout sofa bed. All of the spacious marble bathrooms have separate tubs and showers. Four Seasons guests have access to the adjacent Sports Club/LA, which has a pool. For kids planning to splash around, the concierge will supply passes to the San Francisco Marriott hotel pool, which is accessible via the hotel's back entrance. If you didn't have to walk out the building to use a pool in a dreary-looking room, I'd name the Four Seasons the top family hotel in San Francisco. (As it is, that honor goes to the St. Regis, noted below.)

757 Market St. (at 3rd St.), San Francisco, CA 94103. ✆ **415/633-3000.** Fax 415-633-3001. www.fourseasons.com/sanfrancisco. 277 units. $439–$600 double; from $845 suite. $30 for 3rd adult in room; kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. No rollaways; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $46. Small pets welcome (1 per room). **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; health club; concierge; courtesy car; business center; room service; massage; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD w/movies, games, dataport, high-speed Internet access, minibar, coffeemaker (on request), hair dryer, iron, safe, iPod dock.

Palace Hotel ★★ This landmark hotel—built in 1875, rebuilt after the 1906 fire, restored in 1991, renovated again in 2003, and still honored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation—is aptly named. The over-the-top decor, complete with burgundy carpeting, massive chandeliers, marble columns, and the spectacular glass-roofed Garden Court restaurant (made with 80,000 panes of glass), will make kids think they've entered into an actual royal residence. Bedrooms, though much less grand, are sizable, and even the standard doubles are large enough to accommodate a crib. Marble bathrooms and 14-foot ceilings add to the grandeur; in-room refrigerators, 24-hour room service, and three restaurants, including the excellent Kyo-ya (Japanese/sushi), add convenience. The Palace Spa contains an attractive indoor lap pool with a glass ceiling (children must be supervised by someone 16 or over).

Fun Facts **Stump the Tour Guide**

Everyone knows that Enrico Caruso, the world-famous opera star, was staying at the Palace Hotel when the great earthquake of 1906 struck. He is remembered, too, for running out of the hotel and vowing never to return to San Francisco. ***Question:*** What was he wearing when he made his escape? ***Answer:*** A towel. I don't know if he returned it.

The hotel is close to several SoMa attractions, including the SFMOMA and Yerba Buena Center, and the Montgomery Street Muni/BART station and F-Market streetcar stops are on the corner. At check-in, kids receive gift bags with cups and caps, as well as a list of kid-friendly sights and activities. Weekend specials can include rates well below the published rack rates.

2 New Montgomery St. (at Market St.), San Francisco, CA 94105. ✆ **800/325-3589** or 415/512-1111. Fax 415/243-8062. www.sfpalace.com. 552 units, including 34 suites. $529–$589 double; from $775 suite. Kids under 17 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $50; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $48, oversized vehicles $53. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants (2 w/kids' menus); bar; pool; spa/exercise room; concierge; courtesy car; business center; room service; massage; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV, DVD (on request), dataport, high-speed Internet access, fridge, hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player (in some rooms).

St. Regis Hotel ★★★ For hotels in the upper price echelons, it can be hard to rank one luxurious alternative over the other. While I prefer the Four Seasons for its more spacious guest rooms and kid-friendly treats, I give the prize for top luxury family hotel to the St. Regis for its marvelous pool, a feature most kids highly prize. At the Four Seasons, you have to head out the back door to the Marriott for use of an uninspiring pool in an antiseptic, tiled room—not quite the same as popping down the elevator in your swimsuit and plush hotel bathrobe to arrive at a soothing light-filled space housing a glorious, 50-foot-long infinity pool. Kids at the St. Regis are also plenty well pampered. If you talk to the concierge in advance, the hotel will invite the kids to "check in" and sign their names on arrival. Kids will find personalized notes for them in the guest room, as well as a cookie with their own name on it—not to mention kid-sized bathrobes, a toy from the SFMOMA Museum store, and a children's room service menu.

The newest addition to San Francisco's collection of luxury hotels, the St. Regis is decidedly sleek and modern, although the liberal use of rich exotic woods—such as arrestingly beautiful slabs of Mozambican hardwood for the guest room doors and exquisite Polynesian-inspired artwork using Australian lacewood in each guest room—keep the place feeling warm and welcoming. The hotel also boasts $3.5 million worth of art pieces, which could be like a free museum tour for your kids throughout the hotel's common area. The limestone and marble bathrooms with deep-soaking tubs and separate showers featuring dual shower heads are divine, and many rooms have lovely views of Yerba Buena Gardens. For families, a good configuration could be the king room with an interconnecting double-double room. As an extra luxury, the St. Regis's Remède spa, sure to become a destination in itself, customizes each treatment to the client in question.

125 3rd St. (at Mission St.), San Francisco, CA 94103. ✆ **415/284-4000.** Fax 415-284-4100. www.stregis.com/sanfrancisco. 260 units. $339–$689 double; from $650 suite. Kids under 12 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways and cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $45. Pets welcome. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; health club; concierge; courtesy car; business center; 24-hr. room service; massage; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, dataport, CD, high-speed Internet access, minibar, hair dryer, iron (on request), safe, CD player, iPod dock.

EXPENSIVE

San Francisco Marriott I first checked out this hotel because it has a pool, and as I stated at the beginning of this chapter, I intend to list as many hotels with pools as possible—provided they're worth listing. When I walked into the lobby, I started to wonder. Serving guests in a whopping 1,498 rooms (!), the lobby of this conference-oriented hotel is predictably frenetic and crowded at most times of the day. The escalator ride up from the lobby takes you to the mezzanine level, inside an ambitious four-story

atrium decorated with palm trees, fountains, and enough flora and fauna to shame even Walt Disney himself. If you can figure out the complicated elevator options, including low-rise, mid-rise, and high-rise, all detailed in a lengthy menu posted next to the lifts themselves, then you will eventually find yourself in an endless hallway carpeted in garish colors.

Despite all that, it turns out some families keep coming back. Why? First, the indoor pool, which is plenty big and is open from 6am to 11pm. Second, if you can get the right guest room, it can be fairly spacious, and the decor is mercifully more subdued than that found in the hotels' public spaces. Beds are also reportedly quite comfortable, although the double-doubles really are like enlarged twin beds (not queens). If you can get a room in the high tower, you'll get a great view. With two restaurants and two delis on the premises, you'll always find something to feed empty tummies fast. Lastly, while it might be too much for adult sensibilities, the kids will probably love the atrium's over-the-top pseudo tropical decor.

55 4th St. (btw. Market and Mission sts.), San Francisco, CA 94103. ✆ **415/896-1600.** Fax 415/486-8101. www.marriott.com. 1,498 units, including 134 suites. $199–$349 double; $499–$3,250 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways and cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $52. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 3 bars; indoor pool; health club; tour desk; car rental; business center; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV w/movies (DVD in suites), dataport, high-speed Internet access, hair dryer, iron, safe.

W Hotel ★ This ultra-hip hotel seems better suited to families with older children. Teens will feel quite sophisticated hanging around the lobby or cafe at this trendy hotel, playing the chess or backgammon games that sit on small tables, or taking notes on the hip young things that work and play here. Right across the street from Yerba Buena Center and 1 block from the Metreon, it's a perfect location for young adults, who could easily entertain themselves for hours at the Metreon alone.

The ultra-cool attitude continues in the guest rooms, which are sleek, modern, and subtly accented—rather than overcome—by color. Wall units house entertainment centers, and shutters replace curtains on the windows. (The clean lines are handsome, but they don't block light completely.) Sharing a double-double could cut housing rates back to the moderate range. Connecting king and double-double rooms work well for larger families. Rollaway beds are only allowed in Cool Corner king rooms. Fantastic Suites, starting at $1,000, connect a Cool Corner room with a sitting room that has a Murphy bed. Other child-pleasing features include an indoor lap pool and room service. Adults will appreciate the views and the 24-hour concierge services.

181 3rd St. (at Howard St.), San Francisco, CA 94103. ✆ **888/625-5140** or 415/777-5300. Fax 415/817-7823. www.whotels.com. 423 units. $229–$359 double; $1,400–$2,500 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $30; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $45. Dogs and cats welcome ($25 per day). **Amenities:** Restaurant (no kids' menus); bar; pool; exercise room; concierge; business center; room service; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, fax (in some rooms), high-speed Internet access, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player.

MODERATE

Hotel Milano Designed to resemble an Italian villa, this small, modern hotel is one of the better SoMa hotels in this price category. The convenient location is steps away from several entertainment venues, the Westfield San Francisco Centre shopping mall, the Metreon, and Yerba Buena Gardens. You can also reach the Muni and the F-Market streetcars in moments. Room sizes vary, but the larger rooms are certainly more spacious than typical downtown hotels in this price range. Bathrooms use lots of black marble;

bedrooms are masculine in feel with black-trimmed woods and upholstery—but the hotel is overdue for some fresh fabrics on windows and beds. The double-doubles are really dual queens and big enough to share with the kids and still have space for your luggage. There are no connecting rooms or suites suitable for a crowd, but the staff does its best to provide families with the largest rooms available.

55 5th St. (btw. Mission and Market sts.), San Francisco, CA 94103. ✆ **800/398-7555** or 415/543-8555. Fax 415/543-5885. www.hotelmilanosf.com. 108 units. $109–$299 double. Kids under 12 stay free in parent's room. Additional person $20. Rollaways $20; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $30; oversized vehicles $35. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; fitness center; concierge; room service (6am–1am); babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning; executive level rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, wireless high-speed Internet access, minibar, fridge, hair dryer, iron, safe.

3 FISHERMAN'S WHARF

As the most visited tourist destination in San Francisco, Fisherman's Wharf has plenty of family activities, and a few of its hotels have outdoor pools. But the lopsided ratio of tourists to locals makes for a slew of tacky T-shirt shops and lousy restaurants. At least it's next to the bay, and the area's western edge, towards Ghirardelli, is quite scenic.

EXPENSIVE

The Argonaut ★★ I've long wondered why anyone would want to stay in Fisherman's Wharf. Upon seeing the Argonaut, which opened its doors in August 2003, I not only stopped wondering, I wanted to check in immediately. It helps that the hotel is located on the wharf's more picturesque western end. The hotel building, originally built in 1907 and now property of the National Park Service, is part of The Cannery, a historic structure that once housed the world's largest peach canning facility. The $40 million restoration to create this attractive new hotel left the red-brick walls, Douglas fir beams, and wood-plank floors beautifully intact.

The overall decor, which pokes fun at traditional nautical themes, is fresh and appealing. It extends to the sizable guest rooms and bathrooms, which are hued in bright blue, white, and silver. Room configurations include two queens or one king, and a few king rooms also have a pullout sofa. Bay views are an option, as are interconnecting rooms and suites. Rooms have DVD and CD players, and if you pop down to the lobby for the complimentary wine hour, your teens or tweens can take advantage of the two computers with free high-speed wireless Internet access there.

Too bad the Argonaut doesn't have a pool. Then again, if it did, the other wharf hotels might go out of business. When you call, ask whether the Neptune's Adventure package is still available. At last check, it granted a family of four a double queen room, passes to PIER 39 attractions and the Hyde Street Pier, clever kids' gifts, tickets for the cable car a mere block away, and a full breakfast at the hotel's Blue Mermaid Chowder House (p. 130), one of the few good family restaurants in the area.

495 Jefferson St. (at Hyde St.), San Francisco, CA 94109. ✆ **866/415-0704** or 415/563-0800. Fax 415/563-2800. www.argonauthotel.com. 252 units. $199–$249 double; $599–$1,000 suite. Kids under 17 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $20; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $39; oversized vehicles $54; hybrids $30. Pets welcome. **Amenities:** Restaurant; concierge; courtesy car; room service (6:15am–midnight); babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD w/movies and games, free high-speed Internet access, minibar/fridge, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, iPod dock in suites.

MODERATE

Holiday Inn Fisherman's Wharf This is one of the few hotels in town with an outdoor pool and patio, fun to have when the weather cooperates. It's the best part of the property, which sits off busy North Point Street and Columbus Avenue. The entrance is welcoming, but the guest rooms, off a poorly lit hallway, are unimpressive, and some are rather bleak. Bathrooms are better; while on the small side, they include some useful amenities such as magnifying mirrors. The in-house restaurants are mediocre, although they do adhere to the "Kids Eat Free" corporate promotion for guests under 12 dining with their parents. For the price, you can do better.

1300 Columbus Ave. (at N. Point St.), San Francisco, CA 94133. ✆ **415/771-9000.** Fax 415/771-7006. www.holidayinn.com. 585 units. $199–$244 double; from $350 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $10; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $39. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; coffee shop; heated outdoor pool; exercise room; concierge; business center; gift shop; room service (limited hours); babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning; laundromat on site; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, high-speed wireless Internet access, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe.

Hyatt at Fisherman's Wharf ★ If you must stay in Fisherman's Wharf and your kids really want a pool, the Hyatt is the best choice; it ranks a good notch above the other big hotel chains in the neighborhood. Its outdoor pool sits in a protected courtyard away from the street with an inviting spa, attractive chaises and tables, and a nearby indoor shower. The guest rooms and bathrooms, already designed with families in mind, were fully renovated in 2006. The new color combination of rich chocolate brown set against bright white and ice blue is nicely understated. Connecting rooms and double-doubles are available, and complimentary rollaways are available upon request. In-room coffeemakers are available, but the most practical amenities may be the coin-operated washer/dryers on every floor.

The hotel's restaurant serves all day in a sports-bar-like atmosphere surrounded by a total of 28 TVs, one of them measuring a whopping 126 inches. Older kids will enjoy the game room, complete with two pool tables, shuffleboard, and arcade machines. The staff is friendly and helpful, especially the concierge, who will provide you with discount coupons for wharf attractions. Look for room deals on the Hyatt website, but don't expect attractive weekend rates. Weekends here see high occupancy.

555 N. Point St. (btw. Jones and Taylor sts.), San Francisco, CA 94133. ✆ **800/233-1234** or 415/563-1234. Fax 415/486-4444. www.fishermanswharf.hyatt.com. 313 units. $168–$268 double. $400–$1,200 suite. Kids 18 and under stay free in parent's room. Rollaways and cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $45. **Amenities:** Restaurant; heated outdoor pool; exercise room; Jacuzzi; sauna; concierge; courtesy car; room service (limited hours); babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, dataport, high-speed wireless Internet access, fridge (on request), coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe, iPod dock.

Radisson Hotel Fisherman's Wharf If you want a waterfront view and an outdoor pool without breaking the bank, you'll find them here. The Radisson holds the distinction of being the only big chain hotel in Fisherman's Wharf actually on the water front. Jefferson Street runs in front of the hotel, but beyond that is just the bay itself. Also, it's sandwiched between the most popular piers on the Wharf, PIER 39 to the east and Piers 41 and 43, from where the Bay Cruises and the Alcatraz ferries depart, to the west. And it has an outdoor heated pool.

Otherwise, there isn't much charm to the place. One wonders what the architects who built structures like this in the 1960s were thinking, and the dreary color scheme desperately needs a touch-up. The concrete complex covers an entire city block, and shares retail

space with other big chains such as the Gap, Subway, Ben & Jerry's, and the International House of Pancakes (which is the closest breakfast spot, unless you buy a cup of java from the coffee cart inelegantly occupying the lobby). At least the guest rooms and bathrooms are a decent size and, of course, you've got the bay vistas to remind you that you are, in fact, in San Francisco.

250 Beach St. (btw. Mason and Powell sts.), San Francisco, CA 94133. ✆ **866/327-5199** or 415/392-6700. Fax 415/986-7853. www.radisson.com/sanfranciscoca_wharf. 355 units. $149–$259 double. Kids under 17 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $10; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking $28. **Amenities:** Restaurant; heated outdoor pool; exercise room; concierge; business center; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, dataport, free wireless high-speed Internet access, fridge (on request), coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe.

Tuscan Inn ★★ For years, the Tuscan Inn could proudly call itself the best hotel in Fisherman's Wharf. Now that title will have to be passed on to the Argonaut. (Both hotels are part of the Kimpton hotel group.) Tuscan Inn rates are lower than the Argonaut's, but the inn is located on the less picturesque end of Fisherman's Wharf and doesn't have bay views. One thing both hotels lack is a pool, so if you're dead-set on one in this neighborhood, you'll have to go with one of the national chains.

What the Tuscan Inn does have are spacious guest rooms and bathrooms handsomely furnished in warm, inviting colors. Rooms are filled with amenities, including a combination honor bar/fridge, and you can bring Fido with you too. The comfortable lobby puts out hot chocolate and biscotti in the mornings, not just coffee and tea, and hosts a complimentary wine hour in the evenings. More important, the concierge here is friendly and intelligent, setting the tone for the rest of the staff.

Room configurations include double-doubles, but if you are coming to the city between November and April, ask about off-season rates for king premieres (a king-size bed and a sofa bed) or suites, which are sometimes available at excellent rates. The hotel's Cafe Pescatore (p. 131), specializing in reasonably-priced Italian fare, opens onto a pleasant outdoor dining area on the sidewalk.

425 N. Point St. (btw. Mason and Taylor sts.), San Francisco, CA 94133. ✆ **800/648-4626** or 415/561-1100. Fax 415/561-1199. www.tuscaninn.com. 221 units. $159–$209 double; $249–$299 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $20; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $38; oversized vehicles $48. Pets welcome. **Amenities:** Restaurant; concierge; courtesy car; room service (limited hours); babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning; executive-level rooms; free local calls (30 min.). *In room:* A/C, TV (DVD in suites), free wireless Internet access, minibar/fridge (on floors 2–4 only), coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, iPod dock.

INEXPENSIVE

Hostelling International San Francisco, Fisherman's Wharf This option is best for small, adventurous families. Beds here are bunked dorm-style, and bathrooms are down the hall. What sets this place apart from other hostels is its location in the middle of a national park at Fort Mason. Through the windows of this converted army barrack, trees frame a view of Alcatraz and the San Francisco Bay. Although most rooms are dorm style and hold 8 to 12 beds, a few rooms have only 3 or 4 beds. These smaller rooms have the best vistas and can be reserved for families. You'll find small lockers in lieu of closets, so bring locks. All guests have access to a full kitchen, complimentary continental breakfast, and a common area with a cozy fireplace. An on-site cafe serves lunch and dinner, and the friendly volunteers at the information desk can book tours. Although it's a great atmosphere, with interesting types of people from around the world, and you get free

parking, it's up to you if the plastic-covered mattresses, shared showers, and absence of closets are worth the savings.

Fort Mason, Building 240, San Francisco, CA 94123. ✆ **415/771-7277.** Fax 415/771-1468. www.sfhostels.com. 164 beds. Family rooms $58–$125; single beds $23–$29. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Cafe; kitchen; Internet access at kiosk for small fee; laundry facilities. *In room:* Free wireless Internet access, lockers, no phone.

San Remo Hotel Built in 1906 by Bank of Italy (later Bank of America) founder A. P. Giannini, this charming Italianate Victorian originally housed Italian immigrants, among others, made homeless after the earthquake and fire. These days, European travelers and vacationing families on a budget are happy to find the San Remo. An unabashedly old-fashioned pension, the period furnishings, beveled glass, and Victorian detailing take you back to a bona fide slice of San Francisco that's all but disappeared. The bedrooms, which look like they were decorated by someone's grandmother, are small and quaint. Reminiscent of European boarding houses, rooms have no phones, televisions, or en suite bathrooms. Guests share one of many polished and tidy restrooms down the hall.

Families of three can stay in a room with one queen and one twin for $90 or less. Larger families will be relegated to twin-bedded rooms for the kids and queen rooms for the adults—the rooms don't connect, so this hotel isn't ideal for families with younger kids. The location is within walking distance to North Beach, Fisherman's Wharf, and public transportation, but this is a tough neighborhood in which to park. Bottom line: the San Remo isn't for everybody. If you expect a high level of service and comfort on your vacation, you'll be better off at a mainstream hotel.

2237 Mason St. (near Chestnut St.), San Francisco, CA 94133. ✆ **800/352-7366** or 415/776-8688. Fax 415/776-2811. www.sanremohotel.com. 62 units. $75–$89 double. No rollaways or cribs. AE, DC, MC, V. Self-parking $16–$19. **Amenities:** Laundry facilities. *In room:* No phone.

4 THE EMBARCADERO

Following the 1989 earthquake and the 1990s building boom, this forgotten part of town saw the construction of new condominiums and commercial space. Although hotels remain scarce, the proximity to downtown, the Ferry Building, and plentiful public transportation make this waterfront neighborhood an ideal place to stay.

VERY EXPENSIVE

Hotel Vitale ★★ Opened in 2005, the Vitale bills itself as the "only luxury waterfront hotel" in San Francisco, offering "luxury naturally." What this means for you and yours is fabulous views from many of the guest rooms, decor in soothing earth tones, playful photographs of nature, and other "natural" touches such as hallway lighting fixtures that evoke sunlight streaming through a forest canopy. Also, to be clear on the meaning of "waterfront," the Vitale does have a largely unobstructed, and very lovely, view of the San Francisco Bay, but it's actually across the street from the water's edge. Also, I would note that while the Vitale has plenty of opulent touches such as sandstone bathroom floors and some deep-soaking tubs (not all rooms have bathtubs), not all the details add up to the same exclusive experience one might find at more established luxury chains such as the Ritz-Carlton or St. Regis. The spa consists of just three treatment rooms; the fitness center is quite petite; and while guests may use the YMCA pool for free, it is 1 block down the street.

That's not to suggest you shouldn't choose the Hotel Vitale if you can get a good deal. For families, a good option could be one of the six Family Studio suites, which feature a larger room with a king-size bed and a pullout sofa, as well as a small dining table. A few of these suites have a curtain that parents can pull across the room to separate the sleeping little ones while the adults watch a movie in bed. Unfortunately, these suites don't offer views of the water. A possibility that does feature the Vitale's signature views is one of the seven interconnecting room configurations, pairing a king-size bed room with a spa shower, but no tub, with a room that has two twin beds as well as a bathtub. One word of caution: The Vitale is also home to the indoor-outdoor Americano Bar, which is packed with 20-somethings most nights of the week. The upshot is that the Vitale is in a very desirable location, offers fabulous views, and boasts very new, well-decorated rooms. But because the family suites don't have the views and the Americano Bar is not quite a kid-friendly scene, I'd try to get a good deal on room prices before booking.

8 Mission St. (at Steuart St.), San Francisco, CA 94105. ✆ **888/890-8688** or 415/278-3700. Fax 415/278-3750. www.hotelvitale.com. 199 units. $329–$399 double; $379–$699 suite. $30 for 3rd adult in room; kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways and cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $51. Dogs welcome, $35 fee. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; fitness center; concierge; courtesy car; business center; room service; massage; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, dataport, free high-speed Internet access, minibar, coffeemaker (on request), hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player, iPod dock.

EXPENSIVE

Harbor Court Hotel ★ This hotel is in one of the best locations in town, offering lovely views of the San Francisco Bay and the Bay Bridge. You'll be steps away from the Ferry Building and will have immediate access to the Embarcadero promenade for lovely waterside strolls or bike rides. Moreover, you'll be within walking distance of the SoMa attractions, and public transportation options abound. Compared with the newer Hotel Vitale just down the street, the Harbor Court is a better value. One reason for the Harbor Court's good rates is that, because it's a historic building, rooms and windows are on the small side. So while view rooms look out onto the bay, you have to stand near the window to take it all in; the view doesn't just permeate the room as it might at more posh hotels with massive picture windows.

The hotel's overall feel is intimate, funky, and friendly, and the colorful lobby is very inviting. Ozumo is a great Japanese restaurant off the lobby, but it's not really a family-friendly destination. In fact, and herein lies the rub, the hotel itself was designed more for couples and business travelers, as it has no double-double rooms. You can reserve a twin-bedded room for the kiddies, but you'll be sleeping elsewhere because the maximum occupancy here is two, unless you splurge on the two-bedroom suite. That basically makes it suitable for couples toting a baby or families with kids old enough to sleep in their own non-interconnected guest room. But the great waterfront location, excellent rates, and full use of the YMCA next door (including its Olympic-sized pool, fitness center, and even a babysitting facility) make the Harbor Court worth looking into. Check the website for packages and weekend specials.

165 Steuart St. (btw. Mission and Howard sts.), San Francisco, CA 94105. ✆ **866/792-6283** or 415/882-1300. Fax 415/882-1313. www.harborcourthotel.com. 131 units. $139–$239 double; $499 suite. No rollaways; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $40, $30 hybrid. **Amenities:** Restaurant; complimentary evening beer and wine reception; pool; health club; concierge; courtesy car; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV, free wireless Internet access, minibar, complimentary morning coffee and tea, hair dryer, iron, CD player, iPod dock.

Hyatt Regency San Francisco ★ Although it's a huge corporate hotel where your children are likely to get lost if they head to your room without a detailed map, the Hyatt Regency's terrific location at the foot of Market Street makes up for every failing. Guests can enjoy the delightful Ferry Building across the street, and several shops, restaurants, and cinemas are at hand throughout the Embarcadero Center. Rooms are well equipped and very spacious, and many have bay views. Given the size of the rooms, the Hyatt Regency is the cost-efficient choice for families wanting to stay in the neighborhood. In addition, you'll find two restaurants, sundries, and an on-site fitness center. I remember staying here when I was a kid, and being enthralled with the indoor glass elevators that travel up the massive, 17-story indoor atrium, which were featured in the Mel Brooks film *High Anxiety.* Kids today still find those elevators an entertainment center in and of themselves.

5 Embarcadero Center (at Market St.), San Francisco, CA 94111. ✆ **800/233-1234** or 415/788-1234. Fax 415/398-2567. www.sanfranciscoregency.hyatt.com. 803 units, including 39 suites. $159–$350 double. $25 3rd adult in room. Rollaways and cribs free. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $56. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; exercise room; concierge; business center; gift shop; room service (6am–midnight); babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, high-speed Internet access, minibar, fridge (on request), coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, iPod dock in suites.

5 NOB HILL

The hillcrest where San Francisco's early millionaires built their mansions is home to some of the city's most elegant hotels. Views from guest rooms here are among the best in town, and the area feels residential even though it's just a few blocks from the city center. Kids will enjoy the nearby park and playground. The downside for little ones is the steep walk uphill from Union Square, but you can always catch the California cable car line, which runs close by. Room rates here are very high, but if your timing is right you may get a good deal.

VERY EXPENSIVE

Fairmont Hotel ★★★ Children of any age will be impressed arriving at this landmark 1907 hotel, which adorns one side of Nob Hill with its imposing facade and colorful flags. Inside, the expansive lobby's high ceilings, marble columns, and chandeliers will leave little girls expecting Cinderella to turn up. Despite the splendor, the overall feeling is relaxed and friendly. Guest rooms in the historic building are spacious by any standard, and the closets are so large that many will comfortably fit a crib or even a rollaway! If you prefer separate showers and tubs—and a stellar view—select a room in the tower building. Numerous combinations of suites and rooms, with king-size beds, queens, or double-doubles, are available.

Be sure to mention that you're traveling with kids when you call in-house reservations. The hotel has age-appropriate amenities such as milk and cookies at check-in, knapsacks, and maps, plus, 8- to 11-year-olds qualify to act as "doorman for a day." Now, don't get excited: No one's putting your kids to work while you take off for Saks. But kids get to wear a hat, blow a whistle, and have a photo taken with the doorman—all at no charge. The gorgeous Laurel Court dining room serves afternoon tea with a choice of menus, including one for children. The kitschy Tonga Room provides a tropical rainstorm during happy hour (with inexpensive hors d'oeuvres). If your kids are *Eloise* fans, or just have excellent taste, they'll love this hotel.

950 Mason St. (at California St.), San Francisco, CA 94108. ✆ **800/441-1414** or 415/772-5000. Fax. 415/772-5013. www.fairmont.com/sanfrancisco. 591 units. $199–$499 double; from $500 suite. Kids under 17 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $30; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $50. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; outdoor terrace; bar; concierge; business center; salon; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning; complimentary morning coffee and tea in lobby. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD and games, fax, dataport, high-speed Internet access, minibar, hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player, iPod dock in suites.

The Huntington Hotel ★ Owned and operated for more than 80 years by a local family, the Huntington Hotel keeps a lower profile than the neighboring Nob Hill hotels, but is equally upscale. For those traveling with young children, there are a few reasons to consider this hotel. The location is great: Huntington Park across the street has a nice playground for under-8s, which may offer a well-deserved break for a kid who has followed parents around the sights all day. Grace Cathedral, kitty-corner to the hotel, is also a serene place to walk and stretch your legs, and the cable car stop is next door. Moreover, the building was originally conceived as an apartment bloc, so many of the rooms are very spacious and can easily fit a crib.

The hotel's most family-friendly feature may be the seven suites that have kitchenettes, a rarity in upscale hotels. In addition to the suites, connecting king and double-double rooms are also an option. Although elegant, the decor is a bit heavy and in need of updating. The Luxury and Huntington rooms on the upper floors have great views, but the Deluxe and Superior rooms on the lower floors are larger. The hotel's exquisitely beautiful spa, which unfortunately is not open to guests under 16, is one of the nicest in San Francisco and offers divine treatments of every sort. The Big Four restaurant, dark and clubby, exudes more than a hint of old San Francisco.

1075 California St. (at Taylor St.), San Francisco, CA 94108. ✆ **800/227-4683** or 415/474-5400. Fax 415/474-6227. www.huntingtonhotel.com. 135 units. From $315 double; from $540 suite. Kids 5 and under stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $30; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $39. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; pool (16 and over only); spa/exercise room; concierge; courtesy car; room service (6am–11:30pm); massage; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD w/movies, fax, wireless high-speed Internet access, kitchenettes available, hair dryer, safe, CD player (on request), iPod dock.

Mark Hopkins InterContinental ★★ The Mark Hopkins, named after the founder of the Central Pacific Railroad, opened in 1926 and remains a San Francisco landmark. The hotel is very family-friendly, providing a teddy bear and a backpack of kids' amenities for 2- to 11-year-olds, as well as kids' menus in all the restaurants. (Ask about the "Kids in Tow" program when you make a reservation.) With advance notice, the hotel will rent strollers or other baby paraphernalia for you.

Guest rooms are classy and plush, with fine fabrics and maple furnishings. Views from the upper floors are unsurpassed. The big news for families is the recent opening of the hotel's Club InterContinental, located on the lobby floor. An additional $60 a day per two adults and $15 per child (for young kids they may waive the additional $15 charge) grants you access to an entertainment and food lounge. Big kids will love the lounge, where they can choose from more than 50 DVDs at "TV Central," peruse a collection of teen magazines, listen to XM satellite radio on wireless headsets, or play board games. The plethora of food—including baked goods and fruits for breakfast, lunch snacks at noon, high tea with mini sandwiches in the afternoon, and a "sweet dreams" offering of milk and cookies in the evening—means you'll take care of at least one daily meal for the family, making the club's daily access charge well worth considering. You get access to the club at no additional charge if you stay in a suite at the standard rate.

The 19th-floor Top of the Mark restaurant/bar offers a Sunday brunch and keeps coloring books on hand for small guests who like to keep busy. It's been a landmark since 1939, and many non-guests make their way up to gawk at the view from the panoramic windows. With a *prix-fixe* gourmet dinner and dancing on weekend evenings to a live orchestra, you needn't stray far from the kiddies to enjoy a lively night out on the town.

Number One Nob Hill (at California and Mason sts.), San Francisco, CA 94108. ✆ **800/662-6455** or 415/392-3434. Fax 415/421-3302. www.markhopkins.net. 380 units, including 39 suites. $399–$499 double; $650–$4,250 suite. Kids under 18 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $30; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $45. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; concierge; business center; 24-hr. room service; massage (also in-room); babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning; concierge-level rooms; town car (first-come, first-served); doctor upon request. *In room:* A/C, TV, dataport, high-speed Internet access, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe.

Ritz-Carlton ★★ Unlike the Four Seasons and St. Regis, the oh-so-posh decor here is quite traditional. The secret for getting the most out of this hotel is to communicate your every wish to reservations, letting them know whether you're traveling with the nanny, celebrating a special occasion, or accompanied by a child who just brought home a perfect report card. These folks are looking for a reason to spoil you. If your little boy is into action figures, let the concierges know and they'll gladly oblige with a super-hero welcome gift. Pets under 10 pounds are welcome and also entitled to customized amenities, such as doggie beds and bowls.

Rooms range from deluxe doubles to executive suites, which are larger than most one-bedroom apartments in San Francisco. A deluxe with two double beds will still have plenty of room for a crib or rollaway, but if you're sharing with your kids, ask for one of the Stockton Street rooms, which are a bit larger. A handful of connecting rooms are also available. An extra $100 per night will grant you access to the Club Lounge, which comes with a dedicated concierge and a constant parade of food, from an ample breakfast to evening hors d'oeuvres with fruit, snacks, and drinks. Although more expensive than the Mark Hopkins lounge, it may still be a worthwhile investment. Visits during the holidays are especially fun for kids—the Ritz organizes a kids' Halloween tea in October, a teddy bear tea in December, and other annual events. During non-holiday times of year, kids can participate in a scavenger hunt throughout the hotel, with prizes awarded at the front desk.

600 Stockton St. (at California St.), San Francisco, CA 94108. ✆ **800/241-3333** or 415/296-7465. Fax 415/291-0288. www.ritzcarlton.com/hotels/san_francisco. 336 units. From $439 double; from $529 suite. Additional person $30. Rollaways and cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $62. Pets under 10 lb. welcome. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; indoor pool; health club; concierge; courtesy car; business center; 24-hr. room service; massage; laundry service; dry cleaning; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD w/movies and games, dataport, wireless high-speed Internet access, minibar, fridge, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe, CD player, iPod dock.

MODERATE

Nob Hill Inn Finds One of the only moderately priced accommodations on Nob Hill is also an excellent option for families. Built more than a hundred years ago as a private home, the 21-unit inn has been refurbished in Victorian-era antiques, reproduction artwork, top-quality fabrics and a charming antique elevator. "Antiques" and little children may not seem to go together, but what the Nob Hill has going for it are a number of suites with one or two bedrooms and a sofa sleeper in the living room. Most of these suites have a kitchenette complete with a cooking range, sink, refrigerator, microwave

oven, coffeemaker, and plates and utensils. The two-bedroom suites also have two bathrooms. The Huntington suite, complete with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchenette and a dining room, sleeps six. At $275 per day, that's a money-saving deal. Your kids might also get a kick out of the claw-foot tubs and faux antique telephones; parents will appreciate the complimentary breakfast and afternoon tea and sherry. The only downsides are smallish rooms and the inn's location on a busy street (Pine Street is an oft-used one-way thoroughfare from downtown to residential neighborhoods, so cars whiz by in the afternoons). But it's not enough to deter the many families who come for the inn's kitchenette suites. If you want one of them, you should reserve it well in advance.

1000 Pine St. (at Taylor St.), San Francisco, CA 94123. ✆ **415/673-6080.** Fax 415/673-6098. www.nobhillinn.com. 21 units. $125–$195 double; $245–$275 suite. Rates include continental breakfast. No rollaways; cribs free. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking $30–$35/day in nearby garage. **Amenities:** Concierge. *In room:* TV, wireless Internet access, kitchenette in some, hair dryer, iron.

6 THE MARINA & COW HOLLOW

These largely residential neighborhoods are teeming with restaurants, cafes, and boutique shops. The high concentration of families makes for great local playgrounds, and the lovely Marina Green, with its view of the Golden Gate Bridge, is an attraction on its own. The downside is that most hotels here are on Lombard Street, a busy thoroughfare lined with chain restaurants and gas stations.

MODERATE

Cow Hollow Motor Inn & Suites ★ (Finds) The motel side of this popular, nonsmoking establishment has spacious guest rooms in mostly king-size bed and double-double combinations. (There are three double/queen rooms.) All have good-sized bathrooms with plenty of counter space. The decor is plain, but clean and relatively new. With free indoor parking to boot, it's a great deal. Just make sure your room doesn't overlook Lombard Street, as even the double-paned windows don't block out the noise. Just in case, the front desk provides free earplugs.

The real treasures are the 12 suites located in the adjacent building on Chestnut Street. These are brightly decorated one- or two-bedroom apartments that are true homes-away-from-home, with living rooms, fully equipped kitchens, and dining rooms with wood flooring. The two-bedroom suites have two bathrooms, and one of the one-bedroom rentals contains two double beds. Coin-operated washers and dryers are on every floor. The trick is to reserve far in advance—up to a year for visits over holidays. The Inn also discounts the suites an extra $25 per day for stays longer than 5 days.

2190 Lombard St. (at Steiner St.), San Francisco, CA 94123. ✆ **415/921-5800.** Fax 415/922-8515. www.cowhollowmotorinn.com. 129 units. $96–$145 double; $235–$285 suite. Kids under 12 stay free in parent's room. Additional person $10. Rollaways $10; cribs free. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking (1 car per room). *In room:* A/C, TV (DVD for $15/night), free wireless high-speed Internet access in suites, fridge (on request, $5 extra), coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron (on request).

Hotel Del Sol Once upon a time, the Del Sol was a modest motel with the good fortune to be located in Cow Hollow, away from noisy Lombard Street. Then the clever hospitality company, Joie de Vivre, came along. Many gallons of bright yellow, green, and blue paint later, a star was born. She's even got the swimming pool, hammocks, and palm trees to prove it. Most of the all-nonsmoking guest rooms and suites surround a tiled,

color-washed interior courtyard that triples as a parking complex, pool area, and complimentary breakfast bar.

Double-doubles are fine for small families, but if you can, take advantage of the one-bedroom suites with pullout sofas in the living rooms, or the sole "Family Suite" complete with bunk beds, small-scale furniture, toys, and board games. The three so-called kitchenette units are actually bedrooms with a galley containing a counter, sink, fridge, and microwave (no stove). This was once an inexpensive 1960s motel, and the square footage hasn't changed along with the new paint. Rooms are smallish, bathrooms miniscule, ceilings low, and walls thin. If you like the free parking, swimming pool, and Marina location, this place is for you. If you want lots of space, think again.

3100 Webster St. (at Greenwich St.), San Francisco, CA 94123. ✆ **877/433-5765** or 415/921-5520. Fax 415/931-4137. www.thehoteldelsol.com. 57 units. $129–$189 double; $189–$249 suite. Rates include continental breakfast. Kids under 12 stay free in parent's room. Futon, rollaway, or crib $10. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Heated outdoor pool; passes to nearby health club ($15); laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD/VCR, dataport, free wireless Internet access, fridge (on request, $10), coffeemaker (on request), hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, CD player or iPod dock in all rooms.

INEXPENSIVE

The Marina Inn ★ (Value) This inexpensive but tidy inn is most suitable for small families with one or possibly two young children. All guest rooms have queen-size beds, and a few have an additional twin bed. Depending on floor space, the very accommodating staff can provide a rollaway, crib, or foam mattress. Larger families would require taking multiple rooms, but you'll still spend very little for comfortable accommodations that include a continental breakfast of coffee, juice, pastries, and toasted bagels in a pleasant breakfast nook. The pine beds, armoires, and tables in every guest room are simple and lovely. Inside rooms obtain natural light from light wells but are very quiet; the bright outside rooms pick up noise from ever-busy Lombard Street. Moscone Playground, a popular destination for young families, is just 2 blocks away. Also close by are Chestnut Street, a great walking street with some of my favorite family-friendly restaurants, and the famously crooked part of Lombard Street. Compared to the generic motels along Lombard, the Marina Inn is a Victorian oasis in a safer section of the neighborhood.

3110 Octavia St. (at Lombard St.), San Francisco, CA 94123. ✆ **800/274-1420** or 415/928-1000. Fax 415/928-5909. www.marinainn.com. 40 units. $65–$135 double. Rates include continental breakfast. Kids under 5 stay free in parent's room. Additional guests $10. Rollaways and cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Concierge; business center. *In room:* TV, free wireless Internet access, hair dryer (on request), iron (on request).

Marina Motel ★ The flower-bedecked Marina Motel blends into the surrounding stucco and concrete structures, so be on the lookout for the courtyard entrance between Broderick and Divisadero streets. This is a good option if you have a car, because the parking is off street in little garages and it's free. The guest rooms, all of which face the courtyard, are easily the most charming in the neighborhood. They've recently been redecorated with pine furniture, Italian tiles in the bathrooms, and attractive quilts, and every room has a refrigerator and coffeemaker. In addition to double-doubles and family suites (two bedrooms with a shared bathroom), there are two units with fully stocked kitchens. Management's preference is to rent the kitchen units by the week, so discuss your options with the reservations desk if you'll be staying for a shorter period.

Chestnut Street shopping and dining is a short walk away. The Presidio's Lombard Gate entrance is also within walking distance, and you can take advantage of the free

Presidio shuttle buses to get around inside. The 30-Stockton Muni bus from Chestnut Street brings Marina visitors through North Beach, Chinatown, and Union Square. You may spend more time traveling to other neighborhoods, but at the Marina Motel you'll spend a lot less on accommodations.

2576 Lombard St. (btw. Broderick and Divisadero sts.), San Francisco, CA 94123. ✆ **800/346-6118** or 415/921-9406. Fax 415/921-0364. www.marinamotel.com. 39 units. $95–$155 double; $119–$219 suite. Kitchens available for stays of 5 nights or more ($10 extra). Additional person $10. Rollaways and cribs $10. AE, DISC, MC, V. Free parking. Dogs welcome in some rooms ($10 per night). *In room:* TV, free wireless Internet access, fridge, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron.

7 JAPANTOWN

Close to the tony Pacific Heights neighborhood, quiet Japantown is home to two hotels that offer more for your money than you'll find in more highly touristed areas. You won't be in the center of the action, but multiple bus lines can get you there quickly. Plus, Japantown's Asian shops and restaurants will add an extra sense of adventure to your family vacation.

MODERATE

Kabuki Hotel ★★ (Value) Upon arrival, your kids will get some immediate cross-cultural edification, with a complimentary Japanese tea service brought to your room. The hotel's Asian-accented guest rooms were all redone in 2007 and include top-quality linens, updated marble and tile bathrooms, the latest electronics (flatscreen TVs, iPod docking stations, free high-speed wireless Internet, and so on), and Asian tea kettles. The intended mood here is serene. If tranquillity is hard to achieve with your little ones around, at check-in request a room with a Japanese-style deep-soaking tub. Then send one parent to visit Japantown's bookstores and gift shops with the kids while the other one of you indulges in a long, soothing bath.

Your children will enjoy the extra Japanese feel of one of the three family suites. There, a *shoji* screen can be closed to separate the main area with king-size bed from another section just for the children with two futons resting on tatami mats. At bedtime, the kids can pretend they're in Japan. (Unfortunately, family suites do not have the luscious Japanese tubs.) When it's time to get back to San Francisco sightseeing, you'll have 10 bus lines within a 4-block radius to get you wherever you need to go.

1625 Post St. (at Laguna St.), San Francisco, CA 94115. ✆ **800/533-4567** or 415/922-3200. Fax 415/614-5498. www.jdvhotels.com/kabuki. 218 units, 15 suites. $129–$289 double; $209–$329 suite. Kids under 17 stay free in parent's room. Rollaways $15; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking $35/day, self-parking $15/night. **Amenities:** Restaurant; concierge; business center; fitness center; room service (6:30am–11pm), laundry service; dry cleaning; club-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, dataport, free wireless high-speed Internet access, fridge, tea kettle, hair dryer, iron, safe, iPod dock.

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel Tomo (Value) Here's another great Japantown deal. At Hotel Tomo, a Best Western Hotel/Joie de Vivre hotel, you can get a bright, newly furnished room with two queen-size beds for not much more than $100 ($109 and up, depending on occupancy). Use your AAA card and get a further discount. The added bonus: Rooms all have one wall whimsically decorated in Japanese pop art style. The rest of the room decor is light and modern, with lemon-yellow bed covers, blond-wood furniture, and other pop art

touches that make this a definite cut above the usual, utilitarian Best Western. Better yet, rooms come with two queen-size beds, as opposed to the cramped double-double configurations more common in the moderately priced hotels downtown. Four sets of rooms interconnect; two of these connect a room with a king-size bed with a room that has two queen-size beds. Depending on your kids' interests, the most attractive option of all may be of the "gaming suites," which contain the latest Sony PlayStation, Wii, bean bag chairs, and a 6-foot LCD projection screen. If your kids are teens, let them play a couple rounds of video games while you shop for lovely Japanese ceramics or a new kimono around the corner in the Japantown shops. Some rooms on higher floors have neighborhood views.

1800 Sutter St. (at Buchanan St.), San Francisco, CA 94115. ✆ **800/738-7477** or 415/921-4000. Fax 415/563-1278. www.jdvhotels.com/tomo. 125 units. $109–$189 double; from $550 suite. Kids under 17 stay free in parent's room. Rollaway $10; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking for $20/day or on overflow lot a few blocks away for $15/day. No pets. **Amenities:** Restaurant; concierge; fitness center; laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV w/movies and games, dataport, wireless Internet access, fridge, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, iPod dock.

8 LAUREL HEIGHTS

This solidly residential neighborhood is a good choice for young families or anyone who wants respite from the urban jungle. Sacramento Street shopping has something for everyone, kids included, and Laurel Village, almost an old-fashioned strip mall, draws crowds of locals.

MODERATE

The Laurel Inn ★★ (Value) One of the few hotels in the neighborhood, the Laurel Inn is terrific and a good value. It's ideal for large families, since 18 units have kitchenettes. Don't be dismayed by the motor lodge exterior. Inside, it's polished and sleek. Configured with either two double beds or a king-size bed and a sofa bed, many of the warm and inviting guest rooms interconnect as well. All the rooms are spacious enough to accommodate a crib, and some have panoramic city views. For $10 per day, you can make use of the Jewish Community Center's health club across the street; you'll find a state-of-the-art fitness facility, large indoor pools, and plush locker rooms.

The hotel caters to kids with cookies and lemonade in the afternoons, and a complimentary continental breakfast with fresh juices and an array of muffins and pastries helps jump-start the mornings. Moreover, the neighborhood is safe and quiet. At night, enjoy in-room entertainment with help from the hotel's CD and movie lending library. Despite the location away from the tourist zone, convenient bus lines are just outside the front door, including the 3-Jackson to Union Square and the 1-California to Chinatown and the financial district.

444 Presidio Ave. (at California St.), San Francisco, CA 94115. ✆ **800/552-8735** or 415/567-8467. Fax 415/928-1866. www.thelaurelinn.com. 49 units. $189–$219 double. Rates include continental breakfast. Kids under 12 stay free in parent's room. Additional guests $10. Rollaways $10; cribs free. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Free parking. Pets welcome w/some restrictions; call for details. **Amenities:** Nearby health club access ($10); laundry service; dry cleaning. *In room:* TV/DVD, dataport, wireless Internet access, hair dryer, iron, CD player.

5 Family-Friendly Dining

San Francisco is a food-lover's city. Even before renowned Bay Area chef Alice Waters gave birth to California cuisine, San Francisco took advantage of its access to fresh seafood, local produce, and ethnic influences to foster a thriving dining scene. To the north, east, and south are dozens of small family farms, many organic, which supply city restaurants. In addition, the melting pot of immigrants has added serious depth to the epicurean offerings. Great Mexican food abounds in the Mission, and you'll find Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Thai restaurants everywhere. Although North Beach has its share of Italian restaurants, you can also find Spanish, Indian, and Greek cuisine very close by.

With so many tantalizing options, it would be a shame to stick to pizza simply because you have the kids in tow—although San Francisco does have some excellent pizzerias, which are listed in this chapter. Experiencing the city's fabulous food needn't deplete your wallet; ethnic restaurants are often inexpensive, and many moderately priced restaurants are home to capable, aspiring young chefs. Likewise, many of the city's best chefs, whose original restaurants may be fairly grown-up, also have casual eateries where they can showcase their talent at more affordable prices.

Although trying San Francisco's varied cuisine may mean you'll be taking young kids out of their culinary comfort zone, and that you'll be eating in restaurants not populated exclusively by families, you'll soon discover that San Franciscans are a friendly bunch and that most chefs will be happy to accommodate tiny palates should the need arise. My husband and I have dragged our kids to any number of local restaurants and found that, by following the guidelines I list below (see the "Dining Out in Peace" box), we've been able to enjoy many wonderful dinners and, at the same time, introduce our little ones to new and interesting foods.

With that spirit of discovery in mind, I've listed a few dining options in this chapter that are not specifically designed for families but to which kids will certainly feel welcome. I've also included two restaurants for a night you may have a babysitter.

Note that I've listed several restaurants outside the main tourist zones of Union Square, Fisherman's Wharf, and North Beach. In most cases, the best food at the best prices is served in places like the Mission, the Richmond District, or Russian Hill—residential neighborhoods where restaurants may have a more welcoming attitude and where local residents are more likely to bring their kids.

That said, you never know when hunger will strike—so rest assured I've listed plenty of options near the top tourist sights as well. Finally, while I've tried to list varied cuisine, sometimes everyone just needs to take a break from the sightseeing frenzy, sit, and find something on the menu the kids will like. For those moments, I've included plenty of restaurants that are tailor-made for a simple, messy family meal.

A NOTE ABOUT PRICES The restaurants in the reviews that follow are categorized as Very Expensive, Expensive, Moderate, and Inexpensive, based on an approximation of what a family of four would spend for nonalcoholic drinks and

Tips Dining Out in Peace

- **Set the ground rules.** Before entering a restaurant, remind kids that you are going to a special place and that a few key rules apply, such as inside voices and good manners.
- **Bring entertainment.** Crayons, markers, paper, stickers, and so on, will give your children something to do while awaiting their food. If the kids are old enough, bring post cards for them to write.
- **Try word games.** "I Spy" is a good one. Another word game involves one person naming something in a category, such as food. The next person names a word in the same category that starts with the last letter of the previous word (for example, orange, eggplant, tomato, onion . . .).
- **Remember the value of conversation.** Talk with your kids about what you did during the day or what you have planned for the next one. That will help pass the time and encourage restaurant-appropriate behavior.
- **Decide who's "on duty."** Decide ahead of time which adult will have to interrupt his or her meal, should a child act up. Take turns at each meal.
- **Use time-outs.** If your normally polite child acts up, immediately and quietly take him or her outside. This will avoid embarrassment, and will be a lesson to the child. You shouldn't have to do this more than a few times before your child gets the message.
- **Make exceptions.** Your child may normally drink milk with dinner. Permit him or her to have a Shirley Temple (7Up and grenadine with a cherry). This will make dinner out seem special.
- **Use rewards and bribery.** Tell kids that if they behave well and eat their dinner, they'll get a bowl of vanilla ice cream for dessert.
- **Be flexible.** If the kids are tired, skip the appetizers or order food that is quick to prepare. If they've reached their limit, have one parent take them outside to stretch their legs or look for a dessert spot while the other parent pays the bill.
- **Slow down.** Before dinner, take them back to the hotel for a nap to rest up or to a playground to let loose some pent-up energy.
- **Eat early.** If you plan to eat at a more elegant restaurant or if it's the weekend, arrive early, before the restaurant gets full. (Plan a post-dinner walk or activity, such as seeing the sea lions at Fisherman's Wharf in summer or the Union Square Christmas tree in winter.)
- **Do lunch.** Some of the city's finer restaurants are open for lunch. Why not make lunch your special meal of the day? The ambience may be more kid-friendly, the prices lower, and your children better behaved. Then you can all have pizza for dinner, and you won't feel you've missed out.
- **Relax.** San Franciscans are very friendly, and most restaurants are delighted to have children come dine with them.

four main courses. If this family would have to pay $150 or more for a meal, I consider that restaurant **Very Expensive;** from $100 to $150 **Expensive;** between $60 and $100, **Moderate;** under $60, **Inexpensive.** I've included cafes, pizzerias, and casual, order-at-the-counter places under the Inexpensive header, and restaurants that have positioned themselves as combining high-quality ingredients and value in the Moderate column. The Expensive category includes afternoon tea in hotels, usually costly, but delightful if you like that sort of thing. Very Expensive restaurants are for the evenings you've hired a babysitter, unless you're rearing a future Julia Child or Jacques Pepin and wish to inspire her or him. Tax in San Francisco is 8.5%. Tip your server 15% to 20% for good to great service, and at your discretion for lesser quality service. Just please remember that in the U.S. most servers' wages depend on tips.

CHAINS & FAST FOOD You don't find a lot of national chains or even fast-food restaurants in any but the most touristed neighborhoods, such as Union Square and Fisherman's Wharf. For the most part you'll find San Franciscans, with or without kids, prefer chef-driven restaurants with unique identities. As for fast food, you can't do much better than a burrito, but I do understand that kids crave pizzas or burgers once in a while. Instead of pointing you to the nearest McDonald's, however, I have done my best to offer alternatives including locally owned diners and regional chains of Italian restaurants, noodle bars, and pizza parlors.

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VERY EXPENSIVE

Fleur de Lys ★★★ FRENCH Ironically, the first entry in a chapter called "Family-Friendly Dining" doesn't really fit that description. It is the one of two exceptions I've listed for a night when you have a babysitter and want a fabulous meal. It's clear from the moment you walk in the door and see the regal, intimate dining room, tented in 900 yards of richly-patterned red and gold fabric, that Fleur de Lys is the epitome of ultra-luxurious dining. In keeping with the warm, inviting decor, the impeccable service is comfortably unpretentious.

As for the awe-inspiring food, the man behind the mastery is award-winning chef Hubert Keller, a native of the Alsace region of France now recognized as one of the best chefs in the world (and he has served as a judge on TV's *Top Chef*). Keller's kitchen is firmly rooted in classic French cooking, but includes some playful touches inspired by his new country, such as truffle-infused popcorn and an amazing mini foie gras hamburger. Choose from a menu of three, four, or five courses and expect to be blown away by such offerings as seared Moroccan spiced sea scallops with pomegranate *jus,* cauliflower flan, and Osetra caviar or veal *tournedos* scented with foamy lobster bisque and veal essence. A vegetarian tasting menu, with options such as truffled white bean soup with green garlic fondue and wild mushrooms, is also available. The desserts and cheese selection are obscenely delicious, and the wine list includes several hundred selections. (Although I've noted this isn't a place for kids, I did once spot two pre-teen boys dining with their parents; they were well behaved and seemed to enjoy the experience.)

777 Sutter St. (btw. Jones and Taylor sts). ✆ **415/673-7779.** www.fleurdelyssf.com. Reservations essential. 3-course menu $72, 4-course $82, 5-course $95, vegetarian $72. Mon–Thurs 6–9:30pm; Fri 5:30–10pm; Sat 5–10:00. Closed Sun. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Muni: No. 2-Clement, no. 3-Jackson, no. 4-Sutter, or no. 27-Bryant to Jones St.

EXPENSIVE

Grand Cafe FRENCH The restaurant certainly lives up to its name in terms of decor and style: from the soaring ceilings, massive columns, and wall-sized murals that depict turn-of-the-20th-century Paris to the fine food, this brasserie is abuzz with energy and activity. Located next to the Hotel Monaco and close to the theaters around Union Square, tourists and locals gravitate to the stunning dining room for California-inspired French dishes prepared in an open kitchen with a theatrical flair. Typically French appetizers include foie gras or escargot, while entrees may include a seafood stew bouillabaisse, or boeuf bourguignon. The Grand Cafe's coveted banana cream pie continues to grace the menu, even as chefs come and go.

While the food is tasty, it's not always as majestic as the room that houses it. For a taste of grandeur without the grand prices, check out the adjacent, more casual Petite Cafe for grilled dishes such as hangar steak or salmon, steamed shellfish, pizzas from a wood-fired oven, salads, sandwiches, and desserts. Even in the main room, children may order off the Petite Cafe menu.

501 Geary St. (at Taylor St.). ✆ **415/292-0101.** www.grandcafe-sf.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $12–$22 lunch, $19–$32 dinner; Petite Cafe $8–$17. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Breakfast Mon–Fri 7–10:30am, Sat-Sun brunch 8am–2:30pm; lunch Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm; dinner Mon–Thurs 5:30–10pm, Fri–Sat 5:30–11pm, Sun 5–10pm. Petite Cafe, Sun–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–midnight. Muni: Powell-Hyde or Powell-Mason cable car to Union Sq., and then walk 2 blocks west.

Millennium VEGAN Admittedly, Millennium is not for everyone. Some vegetarian eateries are so good even the most avowed carnivores will find something to love. One such place is Greens in the Marina (p. 133). But Millennium is not just vegetarian. It's vegan, meaning you won't find any animal products on the premises. Without eggs or dairy, concocting a meal meat-eaters can sink their teeth into becomes more challenging.

But I list this place precisely because so many young adults are opting out on meat these days, and at least here teens won't be groaning at the menu and then ordering little more than plain lettuce leaves. They can choose instead from various meatless concoctions that are rich in flavors and protein. One note of advice: Stick to dishes that don't try to mimic ones traditionally made with animal products. If you find exotically-spiced dishes on the seasonally changing menu, such as the Indian-influenced griddle cakes, you won't be disappointed. But dishes like the warm spinach salad with tofu tempura left me wishing for real goat cheese, and the black bean torte could be so much tastier with actual sour cream. One plus is that the restaurant can accommodate any food aversion or allergy. Call ahead and let them know your kid is allergic to soy, wheat, or nuts, and they'll happily put something together.

580 Geary St. (at Jones St.). ✆ **415/345-3900.** www.millenniumrestaurant.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $21–$24. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 5:30–9:30pm; Fri–Sat 5:30–10pm. Muni: No. 27-Bryant or no. 38-Geary to Jones St., or Powell-Hyde or Powell-Mason cable car to Union Sq., and then walk 2 blocks west.

MODERATE

Puccini & Pinetti ITALIAN This is one Union Square restaurant the kids will definitely enjoy. Children are awfully pleased with the restaurant's activity pack, which includes crayons, and the make-your-own pizza option, where servers bring the pizza dough and fixings to the table so that young chefs can create exactly what they want. For adults, the menu offers plenty of hearty pasta dishes and well-known Italian favorites such as eggplant parmigiana and veal piccata. Service is considerate, and the colorful decor welcoming. You can treat Puccini & Pinetti as a casual dinner stop or make an evening of it.

129 Ellis St. (at Cyril Magnin St.). ✆ **415/392-5500.** www.pucciniandpinetti.com. Kids' menu, highchairs, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses $13–$25 lunch, $16–$29 dinner; kid's menu $4–$8. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–4pm; Mon–Thurs 4–10pm; Fri–Sat 4–11pm; Sun 5–10pm. Muni: Powell-Hyde or Powell-Mason cable car to Union Sq., and then walk 2 blocks south on Powell to Ellis and turn right.

Sanraku ★ Finds JAPANESE/SUSHI Every neighborhood in San Francisco has a smattering of restaurants boasting "artistic," "exciting," or just plain cheap sushi. That is all well and good, but raw fish is raw fish. It should be fresh and prepared by sushi chefs who know what they're doing. Although it's tough to mess up a California roll, it's equally hard to serve a truly delicious slice of *maguro* (tuna) sashimi, and Sanraku succeeds in doing just that. The simple decor and casual atmosphere belie the truly fresh and well-prepared sushi. Some people may wonder what a sushi joint is doing in a family guide, but at least in these parts children are well acquainted with sushi. My family and I are regulars here. While Dad and I sip sake, the kids enjoy steamed *edamame* (soybeans), avocado and California rolls, and cooked shrimp sushi. Sanraku is moderately priced, but ordering a la carte could edge the bill into the expensive category. For more dollar-conscious options, consider the combination dinners, such as sushi and sashimi, sushi and tempura, or sushi and teriyaki beef, which come with steamed rice, a house salad, and fresh fruit.

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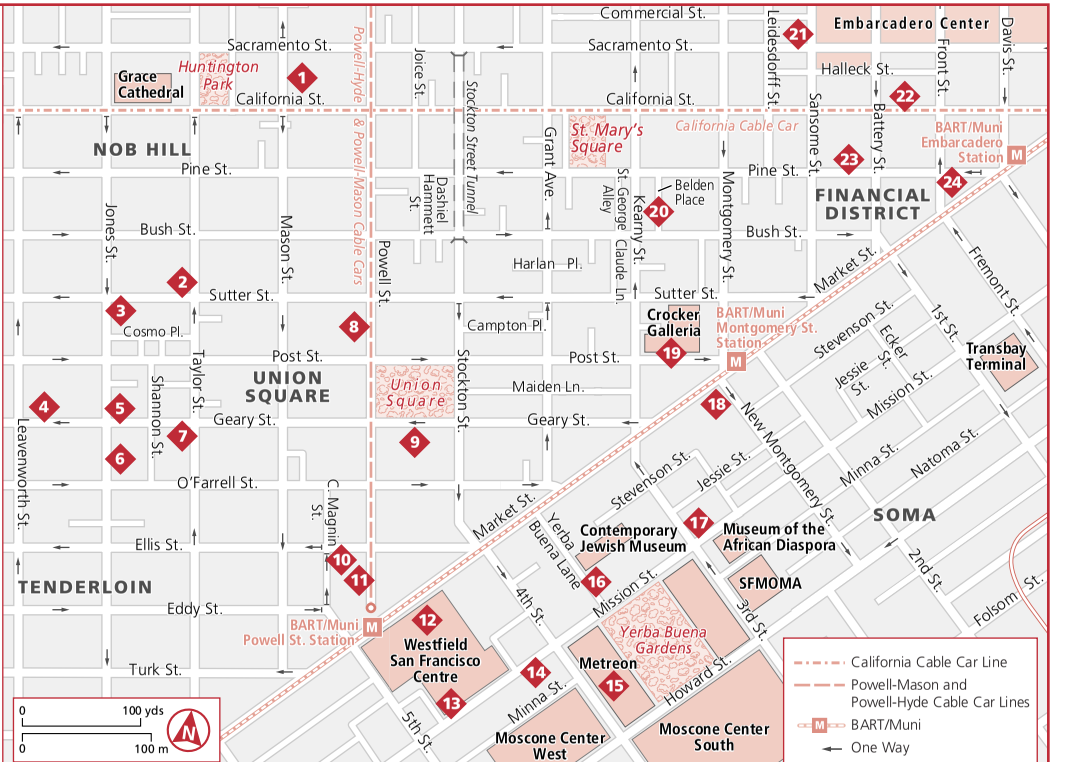

Belden Place—A Slice of Europe in San Francisco

If you want to have a nice meal with proper table service downtown without breaking the bank, come to Belden Place. This alley in the Financial District, bordered by Kearny, Montgomery, Pine, and Bush streets, is lined with moderately priced restaurants cooking up French, Italian, Catalan, and other Mediterranean fare. The lane is patronized by plenty of business people, but the outdoor tables and colorful banners lend an informal feeling, so don't hesitate to bring the kids. Stroll on over and take your pick from the following:

Starting at the Pine Street side of Belden Place is **Brindisi Cucina di Mare** (88 Belden Place; ✆ **415/593-8000**), specializing in Italian seafood. From stuffed calamari and seafood risotto to plenty of kid-friendly pasta, most main courses are less than $24. **Belden Taverna** (52 Belden Place; ✆ **415/986-8887**) serves excessively rich grilled meats and seafood, and a few pasta choices as well. Entrees range from $16 to $25.

Named for its address, **B44** (44 Belden Place; ✆ **415/986-6287**) is a Catalan-style bistro, serving nine kinds of paella, including meat, seafood, and vegetarian items at $17 to $21 each for lunch and $18 to $24 for dinner. Salads, small plates, and dishes such as roasted salt cod or roasted rabbit are also on the menu. The tasty food could be too challenging for less adventurous kids. Just next door, **Plouf** (40 Belden Place; ✆ **415/986-6491**) offers mussels prepared seven different ways, as well as French-accented salads, sandwiches, fish, and meats. All lunch items are less than $20, with fish and chips or a sirloin burger being the most kid-friendly among them. Dinner entrees range from $15 to $26.

A better choice for families is at 28 Belden Place: **Café Tiramisu** (✆ **415/421-7044;** www.cafetiramisu.com). Kids will appreciate the Italian fare, including pasta dishes—ranging from $14 to $18 at lunch and $14 to $21 at dinner—which those with smaller appetites can easily share. Main courses such as *cioppino,* Italian seafood stew, or veal scaloppini range from $17 to $23 (up to $34 at dinner). The most moderately priced pick of the bunch is Parisian-Bistro inspired **Café Bastille** (22 Belden Place; ✆ **415/986-5673**). While parents savor French onion soup, quiche, or grilled steak and fries, kids can share a French hot dog on a baguette with cheese and fries. Most lunch and dinner choices are $9 to $18.50.

But perhaps you want something more traditional, and you've reached the end of the alley. You're in luck. On the corner at 374 Bush Street you'll find **Sam's Grill** (✆ **415/421-0594**), one of the oldest restaurants in San Francisco. Grab a cozy wooden booth and order charcoal-broiled fish, roasted chicken, or a simple pasta dish. Entrees range from $10.50 to $50. For more info, visit www.belden-place.com.

704 Sutter St. (at Taylor St.). ✆ **415/771-0803.** www.sanraku.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses $12–$38. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–10pm; Sun 4–10pm. Muni: No. 2-Clement, no. 3-Jackson, no. 4-Sutter, or no. 27-Bryant to Taylor St.

Tadich Grill AMERICAN/SEAFOOD People come to the Tadich Grill as much for the history as for the food. Businesspeople and tourists alike appreciate the clubby, traditional feel of San Francisco's oldest restaurant, which started life in a different location more than 150 years ago. The long bar, dark wood interior, and gruff waiters may seem intimidating to little ones, so settle the family into one of the many cozy booths to better enjoy the old-time feel. Stick to uncomplicated and traditional dishes, such as shrimp Louie, grilled fish of the day, clam chowder, or creamed spinach, and you will eat well. The Tadich doesn't take reservations, so be prepared to stand in line.

240 California St. (btw. Front and Battery sts). ✆ **415/391-1849.** Boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $15–$34. MC, V. Mon–Fri 11am–9:30pm; Sat 11:30am–9:30pm. Muni: F-Market streetcar to Front St. or no. 1-California or no. 41-Union bus to California St.

INEXPENSIVE

Blondie's Pizza PIZZA The staff here cuts and sells huge wedges of thick-crusted pizzas slathered with tomato sauce, cheese, and various toppings at a constant pace. At $3.50 a slice, you can feed an army and still have change left over for a cable car ticket. You can order pepperoni, but if you ask for carrots and broccoli, you've even got yourself a healthy meal. You won't find tables here, but the benches at Union Square are just 2 blocks away.

63 Powell St. (btw. Ellis and Market sts). ✆ **415/982-6168.** Pizza $3.50–$3.75 per slice. AE, MC, V accepted on orders over $30; otherwise, cash only. Mon–Sat 10am–10pm; Sun 10am–8pm. Muni: Powell-Hyde or Powell-Mason cable car to Ellis St.

Dottie's True Blue Cafe AMERICAN/BREAKFAST The best meal to have here is breakfast (some locals and tourists claim it's the best in town), but the place is so small that you'll have to wait—unless you have a family of early risers. The big portions of house-made breads, cornmeal pancakes, French toast, eggs, gourmet sausages, fresh orange juice, and cheery trim make the wait well worth it. The lunch menu features hearty salads, sandwiches, and burgers.

522 Jones St. (btw. Geary and O'Farrell sts.). ✆ **415/885-2767.** Boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $6–$13. DISC, MC, V. Wed–Mon 7:30am–3pm. Muni: Powell-Hyde or Powell-Mason cable car to Union Sq., and then walk 3 blocks west on Geary to Jones and turn left.

Sears Fine Food AMERICAN/BREAKFAST Although no longer independently owned (they were bought by Lori's Diner International), Sears Fine Food still makes an effort to maintain its original charm—complete with tile floors, 1930s-style light fixtures, and old photographs decorating the walls. It's the perfect spot for breakfast or lunch, with Reubens, burgers, and fish sandwiches among the classics you'll find on the lunch menu, all under $10. I won't recommend Sears for dinner, since entrees start at $14, pushing this into the moderate price category—not where a diner belongs—and, for that price, you can have a more interesting meal elsewhere. The real reason to bring the kids to Sears is their "World Famous 18 Swedish Pancakes," dollar-coin-sized pancakes allegedly still made with Hilbur Sear's 1938 recipe and served hot with butter and maple syrup at any time of day for $8.95. You can also order other breakfast items daily until 3pm.

439 Powell St. (at Sutter St.). ✆ **415/986-0700.** www.searsfinefood.com. Kids items on menu. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations for dinner only. Main courses $8–$12 breakfast, $7–$10 lunch, $14–$29 dinner. V, MC, AE, DISC. Daily 6:30am–10pm. Muni: 2, 3, 4 buses, Powell cable car lines.

Sellers Markets ★ CALIFORNIA When I've got to run an errand downtown on a weekday, I try to do it around lunchtime so that I can swing by Sellers Markets. At first glance, it's a sleek lunch spot for the Financial District worker bees. Then you notice that these are no ordinary sandwiches and salads. In fact, all the meats, cheeses, and breads at Sellers Markets come from "artisans," as Jim and Deb Sellers like to call the local ranchers, farmers, and bakers who provide the ingredients for such mouth-watering possibilities as the BBQ chicken sandwich made with free-range pulled rotisserie chicken and melted smoked mozzarella. You'll also find a generous selection of salads, from a Cobb salad with naturally raised pancetta to a sushi-grade ahi tuna salad. For the kids, try one of the thin-crust pizzas or the ham and cheese baguette. Sellers Markets also serves breakfast, so if you're up and about early stop in for a breakfast pizza or an egg "a" muffin, a fried egg on an "artisan" English muffin with additional toppings like Niman Ranch bacon or locally made goat cheese and spinach.

388 Market St. (at Pine and Front sts.) ✆ **415/956-3825.** 595 Market St. (at 2nd and Market sts.) ✆ **415/227-9850.** www.sellersmarkets.com. No reservations. Breakfast main courses $4.25–$5.95. Lunch main courses $6.95–$12. AE, DISC, MC, V. 388 Market St.: Mon–Thurs 7:30am–3pm. Muni: 1, 31, 38 bus, streetcar to Embarcadero Station; 595 Market St.: Mon–Thurs 7:30am–7:30pm; Fri 7:30am–3pm. 1, 31, 38 bus, streetcar to Montgomery Station.

3 SOUTH OF MARKET

EXPENSIVE

Palace Hotel AFTERNOON TEA Tea under the stained-glass dome of the Garden Court at the Palace Hotel, which is every bit as grand as the poshest hotels in London, is a celebratory affair. Linen and silver grace the elegant tables, and the menu consists of the customary dainty sandwiches, scones, and sweets, served with tea of your choice. The Palace cleverly offers a special "Princess" and "Prince" tea for children 12 and under. Along with the sandwiches and pastries, children receive a crown and scepter, and are treated royally as well. During the winter holidays, tea service is offered 6 days a week.

2 New Montgomery St. (at Market St.). ✆ **415/546-5089.** www.gardencourt-restaurant.com. Kids' menu, highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Tea service $40–$52; children's tea $32. AE, DC, MC, V. Sat 1–3pm. From first Fri after Thanksgiving through Dec tea is Mon–Sat 2–4pm. Muni: Any streetcar to Montgomery St. Station.

Restaurant LuLu ★ CALIFORNIA Seasonally changing dishes at this enduringly popular SoMa restaurant might include leek, goat cheese, and bacon tart; stuffed pumpkin blossoms; and grilled prawn risotto. Served on large plates, they are meant to be shared. Rotisserie specials alternate during the week—Wednesday may be leg of lamb day, while Saturday is reserved for roast duck—but the mouth-watering rosemary-scented chicken is a staple. Just make sure you're not seated too close to the rotisserie, lest you come out smelling like smoked meat. With its upscale clientele and sophisticated menu, Lulu's feels quite grown-up, but with a pizza oven and plenty of pasta dishes on the menu, you'll find something the kids will enjoy. Moreover, the large, multi-room space and constant buzz of diners means you won't have to worry about noisy children making a scene; no one will hear them. In its price category, Lulu's is one of the more family-friendly options in the neighborhood.

Fun Facts High Tea

The British tradition of high tea is quite different from afternoon tea. High tea was a hearty meal eaten by the working class around the kitchen table, which often featured high-back chairs—hence the name. Afternoon tea is a more delicate affair with guests perched on the end of cushioned chairs and settees, and with the lady of the house playing "Mother," a term of endearment bestowed on the person in charge of pouring the tea.

816 Folsom St. (btw. 4th and 5th sts.). ✆ **415/495-5775.** www.restaurantlulu.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $12–$17 lunch, $15–$30 dinner. AE, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–11pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton or no. 45-Union-Stockton bus to Folsom St.

Town Hall ★★★ AMERICAN This outstanding tribute to New American cuisine, co-owned by the acclaimed chefs brothers Mitchell and Steven Rosenthal, is so good I had to include it here, even though it's a bit grown-up for kids. Housed in a 100-year-old former electric warehouse, Town Hall's decor evokes early American architecture and sensibilities, with exposed brick walls, crisp white ribbed wainscoting, and Craftsman-style tables and chairs. The food echoes the American feel, drawing on traditions from around the country, with a special nod to New Orleans. Starters may include cornmeal-fried oysters on baby spinach with creamy bacon dressing or warm biscuits with local ham and pepper jam. Two stellar dishes we've enjoyed include wild king salmon with corn and shrimp hash, cherry tomatoes, and hush puppies and a naturally raised pork chop with smashed potatoes, English peas, and fava beans in garlic parsley butter. For dessert, don't miss the butterscotch and chocolate *pot de crème.* I've spotted pre-teens here at dinnertime, but it's a pretty happening scene. Opt instead to bring the kids for lunch.

342 Howard St. (at Fremont St.). ✆ **415/908-3900.** www.townhallsf.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $10–$19 lunch, $19–$29 dinner. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri lunch 11:30am–2:30pm; Sun–Thurs dinner 5:30–10pm; Fri–Sat dinner 5:30–11pm. Muni: Any streetcar on Market to Fremont St., and then walk 2 blocks south.

MODERATE

Pazzia ITALIAN This restaurant, a quick walk from the Yerba Buena Center and the Museum of Modern Art, serves simple and satisfying dishes like excellent pizza, delicious pasta, and roasted meats and chicken. The uncomplicated menu is a delightful California twist on traditional Italian fare. The staff is warm and friendly to kids, and it's definitely a family-oriented little place. If you're in the area and want a real, sit-down meal, there's no better pick for the price.

337 3rd St. (btw. Folsom and Harrison sts.). ✆ **415/512-1693.** Boosters, highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses $11–$26. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri lunch 11:30am–2:30pm; Mon–Thurs dinner 6–10pm, Fri–Sat dinner 6–10:30pm. Muni: Any streetcar to Montgomery St. Station; no. 15-3rd, no. 30-Stockton, or no. 45-Union to Folsom St.

INEXPENSIVE

In addition to the options below, you can find a branch of Mel's Drive-in (p. 136) and Osha Thai (p. 137) in this neighborhood.

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Chow **26**
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Crepevine **12**
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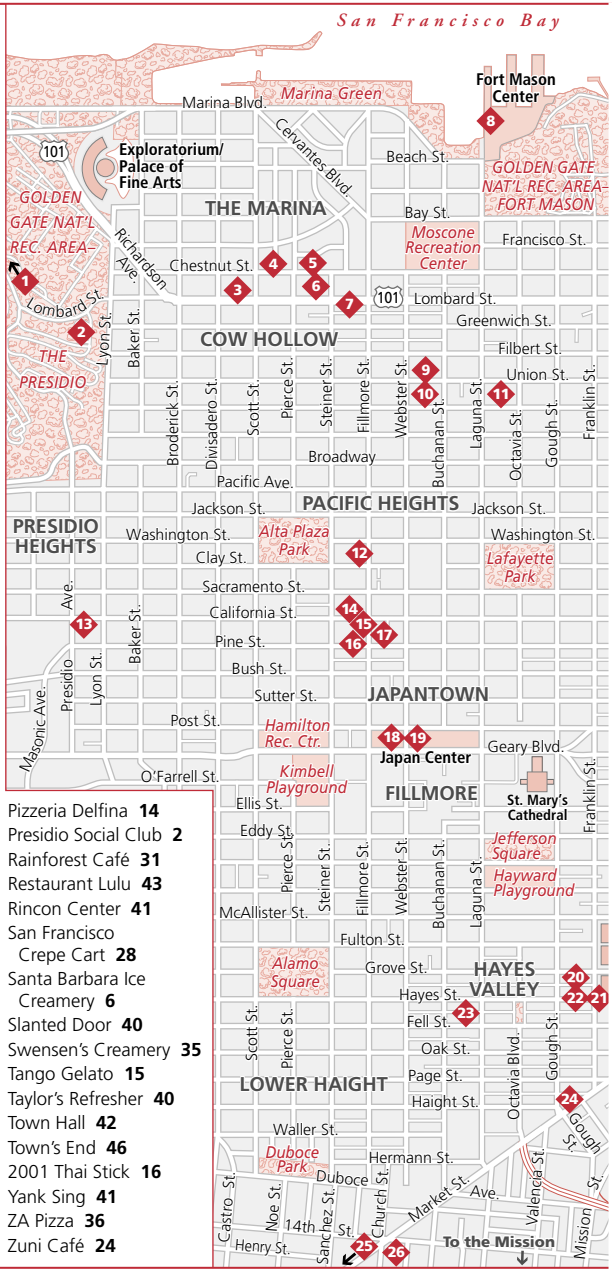

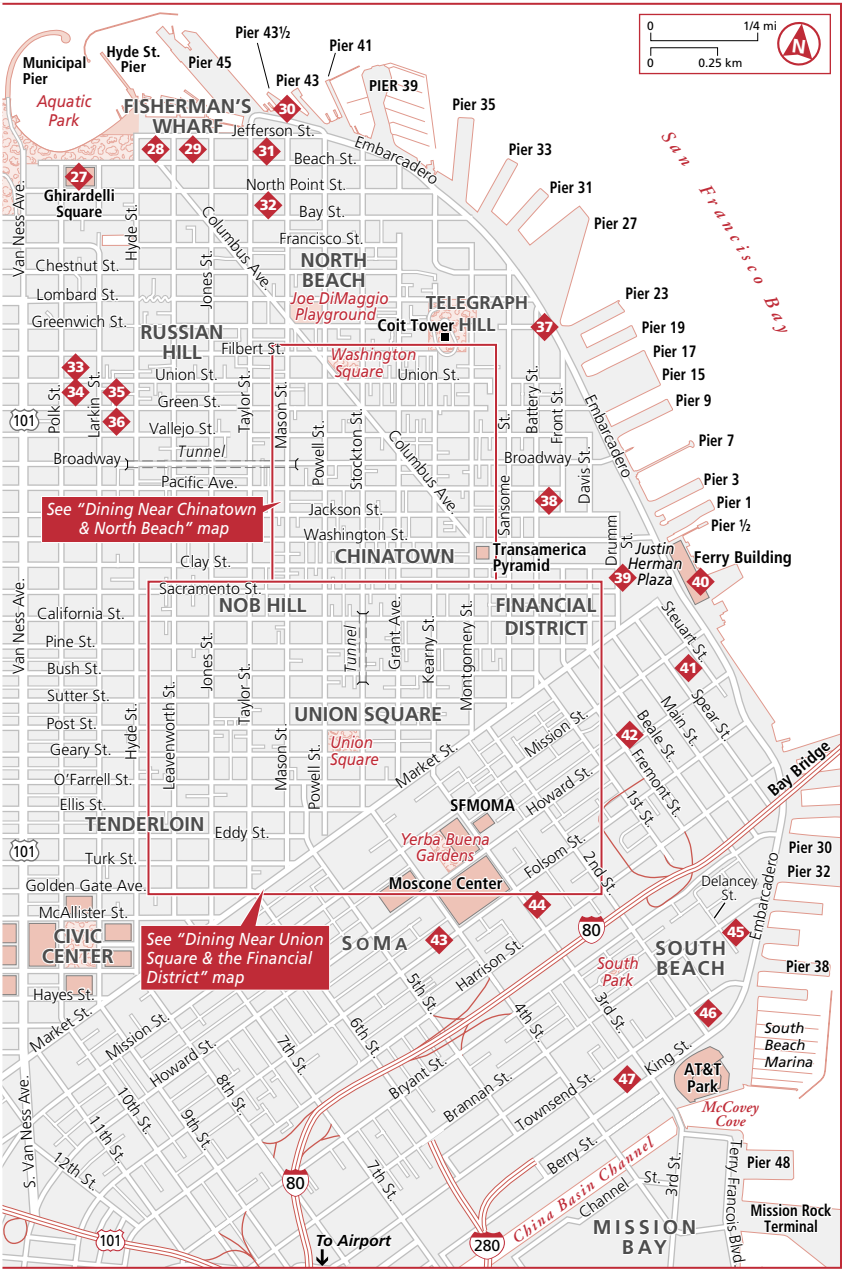
0 1/4 mi
0 0.25 km
N
Municipal Pier
Hyde St. Pier
Pier 45
Pier 43½
Pier 41
Pier 43
PIER 39
Pier 35
Pier 33
Pier 31
Pier 27
Pier 23
Pier 19
Pier 17
Pier 15
Pier 9
Pier 7
Pier 3
Pier 1
Pier ½
Aquatic Park
FISHERMAN'S WHARF
Jefferson St.
Beach St.
North Point St.
Bay St.
Francisco St.
Embarcadero
San Francisco Bay
Ghirardelli Square
Van Ness Ave.
Hyde St.
Columbus Ave.
Jones St.
Chestnut St.
Lombard St.
Greenwich St.
NORTH BEACH
Joe DiMaggio Playground
TELEGRAPH
Coit Tower HILL
RUSSIAN HILL
Filbert St.
Washington Square
Union St.
Battery St.
Front St.
Polk St.
Larkin St.
Taylor St.
Mason St.
Powell St.
Stockton St.
Green St.
Vallejo St.
Tunnel
Broadway
Pacific Ave.
Columbus Ave.
Davis St.
Sansome St.
Jackson St.
Washington St.
Clay St.
CHINATOWN
Transamerica Pyramid
Drumm St.
Justin Herman Plaza
Ferry Building
See "Dining Near Chinatown & North Beach" map
Sacramento St.
NOB HILL
FINANCIAL DISTRICT
California St.
Pine St.
Bush St.
Sutter St.
Post St.
Geary St.
O'Farrell St.
Ellis St.
Grant Ave.
Kearny St.
Montgomery St.
Steuart St.
Spear St.
Main St.
Beale St.
Fremont St.
1st St.
Bay Bridge
UNION SQUARE
Union Square
Market St.
Mission St.
Howard St.
SFMOMA
Leavenworth St.
TENDERLOIN
Eddy St.
Turk St.
Golden Gate Ave.
Yerba Buena Gardens
Moscone Center
Folsom St.
2nd St.
Delancey St.
Embarcadero
Pier 30
Pier 32
McAllister St.
CIVIC CENTER
Hayes St.
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SOMA
Harrison St.
5th St.
4th St.
3rd St.
South Park
SOUTH BEACH
Pier 38
South Beach Marina
AT&T Park
King St.
Bryant St.
Brannan St.
Townsend St.
McCovey Cove
Berry St.
Pier 48
Terry Francois Blvd.
Mission Rock Terminal
6th St.
7th St.
8th St.
9th St.
10th St.
11th St.
12th St.
S. Van Ness Ave.
China Basin Channel
3rd St.
MISSION BAY
To Airport
101
80
280

Food Courts

What could be more democratic than a food court? Having a wide variety of options reduces strife for families with different tastes, which is just about every family I know. Also, kids have fun waiting in the line of their choice and exercising a bit of independence. In the Union Square area, the **Crocker Galleria** at 50 Post St., at Montgomery Street, has a terrific food court on the third level, open Monday through Friday until 6pm and Saturdays until 5pm. It's always packed at lunch with office workers seeking a quick, inexpensive bite. At the Fountain Café you'll find breakfast bagels, eggs, and baked goods in the morning and sandwiches and burgers at lunch. Get a chili fix at Chili Up; the different versions come with tortillas or corn bread. You'll also find counters for Leila Mediterranean Cuisine; 360 Degree Gourmet Burritos; Chaat Café!, with great Indian take-out; New Asia Restaurant; and Niji Japanese Grill, among other international options. To avoid the rush, arrive before 11:30am or after 1pm and grab a table in the light-filled atrium.

The Cellar in Macy's on Geary and Stockton streets, is not technically a food court, but it does have a Jamba Juice, a Wolfgang Puck Express Café, a Boudin Bakery, a Ben & Jerry's, and a cookie counter. If you're in SoMa, the food court in the new portion of the **Westfield San Francisco Centre** at 5th and Mission streets offers much better eats than your average mall options. Now you can choose from Andale Mexican cuisine, Askew Grill, Bistro Burger, and, what may become the food court's most coveted destination, Out the Door, part of famed chef Charles Phan's collection of restaurants (see Slanted Door on p. 122). In addition to these and other choices, a gourmet grocery opens to the food court, which has seating for up to 800 customers.

And therein lies the rub. The choices may be enticing, but hanging out with 799 other customers in a basement food court is not my idea of fun (although my elder daughter thought it seemed like a grand idea; you never know what'll please the kids). If your family is set on a food court, consider the more manageably sized one at **Metreon** at 4th and Mission streets. There, the Firewood Cafe provides pizzas and salads, Luna Azul makes generously sized burritos, and Buckhorn Grill satisfies hungry meat-eaters. Long Life Noodle Co. and Sanraku, described on p. 108, offer tasty Asian options.

The most attractive food court is **Rincon Center,** at 101 Spear St., between Mission and Howard streets. The 1930s Moderne/Art Deco building is on the National Register of Historic Places and contains an 85-foot waterfall inside the dramatic atrium and murals in the former post office lobby. For a truly cosmopolitan experience, you can send emissaries to Arabi for top-notch Middle Eastern salads, to Sorabol for Korean grilled meats and soup, to Thai to Go for pad Thai, to Wazwan for Indian dishes and naan bread, and to Taqueria Pepe's for burritos. Burgers, pizzas, sandwiches, and soups are also to be had. Yank Sing, the preeminent dim sum restaurant, has a lovely dining room here, which I highly recommend if you have time for a more leisurely lunch (p. 124). With the exception of Yank Sing, which is open daily, the restaurants in Rincon Center are open weekdays from 11am to 3pm.

Beard Papa's BAKERY When this Japanese chain of cream puffs hit the U.S., it became an overnight sensation. What's the secret to these luscious cream puffs? Beard Papa's claims it could be their special 2-hour process mixing custard cream, real whipped cream, and Madagascar vanilla beans to produce the filling, a process that's repeated several times a day. Or maybe it's the ultra fresh crust. Or the interesting way the cream puffs are just a little less sweet than you'd expect them to be. Well, you'll just have to come find out for yourselves. You can get the traditional cream puffs served plain or dipped in chocolate on any day, but unusual fillings like strawberry, green tea, or pumpkin are strictly seasonal.

99 Yerba Buena Lane (at Mission St., btw. 3rd and 4th sts.). ✆ **415/978-9972.** Westfield San Francisco Centre, 865 Market St. (at 5th St.) ✆ **415/978-9975.** www.beardpapasf.com. Cream puffs $2.25 each or $22/dozen. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 10am–8pm; Sun 10am–6:30pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton or no. 45-Union-Stockton bus to Mission St.

Koh Samui & The Monkey THAI Thai seems to be the new Chinese, with spring rolls and pad Thai having taken the place of broccoli beef and cashew chicken as favored take-out fare. But if you want a break from the "typical" Thai food you find most places these days, come to Koh Samui. Combinations sure to whet your appetite include crushed sesame scallops in yellow curry sauce or pumpkin curry chicken. Certainly, you'll find plenty of familiar menu items, from green papaya salad to green curry chicken. For the kids, order the wok-tossed noodles with peanut sauce or even some of the satays. As long as you steer clear of anything marked with an asterisk (for spicy), the kids will be fine. Be sure to order the fried bananas for dessert. "The Monkey" part of the name refers to the attractive shop next door, which sells Thai antiques.

415 Brannan St. (at 3rd St.). ✆ **415/369-0007.** www.kohsamuiandthemonkey.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses $8–$22. MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–3pm; Sun–Thurs 5–10pm; Fri–Sat 5–10:30pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton or no. 45-Union to Brannan St.

'wichcraft ★ SANDWICHES New Yorkers know Tom Colicchio for his lauded restaurants Gramercy Tavern and Craft. You may know the award-winning chef for his role as head judge on the TV show *Top Chef.* Now it's time to get to know him for his . . . um, sandwiches. Yes, Colicchio's West Coast debut is based on slices of bread with stuff inside. The "'wich" in "'wichcraft" is short for sandwich, get it? No matter. When you bite into his juicy slow-roasted pork sandwich with red cabbage and jalapenos, you'll get it. Vegetarians may like the grilled gruyere and caramelized onions on rye, or even a tasty vegan option with chickpeas and roasted peppers. For kids, simply turn to the breakfast menu, which is served all day (and is cheaper). My older daughter ate her entire toasted ham, avocado, and butter sandwich, and loved it. The younger one had a hard time getting her mouth around an impressive triple-decker peanut butter and jelly sandwich, but she almost managed to finish it. Although 'wichcraft is located in the new Westfield San Francisco Centre, it's got the best location of any restaurant there: outside. While the other dining spots are in the thr oes of the mall crowd, 'wichcraft enjoys a corner spot with two 20-foot-high glass walls looking out onto the street. Okay, so the view is just of a parking structure, but the light and airy space—furnished with many small tables and a few long, communal tables—is sleek and welcoming. Word has it Colicchio will expand his offerings and open later into the evening. We'll definitely be back for that.

868 Mission St. (btw. 4th and 5th sts.). ✆ **415/593-3895.** www.wichcraftnyc.com. Highchairs, boosters. No reservations. Sandwiches $6–$10. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 8am–7pm; Fri 8am–8pm; Sat 10am–8pm; Sun 10am–7pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton or no. 45-Union-Stockton bus to Mission St.

Value Bar gain Alert!

For $9.50 and a one-drink minimum each, you can feed the kids at the Fairmont Hotel's Tonga Room during happy hour from 5 to 7pm on weekdays. Polynesian appetizers, including pot stickers, chicken drummettes, Shanghai noodles, fruit, and crudités will fill 'em up, and the tropical storm cued to thunder on the half-hour will provide entertainment. There's nothing else like it.

4 NOB HILL

EXPENSIVE

Laurel Court ★ AFTERNOON TEA The Fairmont Hotel's lovely Laurel Court restaurant, with ivory pillars surrounding lighted domes and a low ceiling that makes the space feel quite intimate, is open for meals almost all day long. Taking the California Street cable car from the foot of Market up to Nob Hill for breakfast sounds like fun to me, but you'll spend a small fortune on your waffles or eggs. Afternoon tea is dear as well, but seems more fitting given the surroundings, and will be especially appreciated by any girls in the family. The kid's tea menu isn't exactly to code: The crustless sandwiches include peanut butter and jelly and tuna salad, and hot cider and cocoa are non-tea alternatives.

Fairmont Hotel, 950 Mason St. (at California St.). ✆ **415/772-5259.** www.fairmont.com. Kids' menu, highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Tea service $34–$46, children's tea $30. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Breakfast daily 6:30–10:30am, lunch daily 11:30–2:30pm, dinner Tues–Sat 6–10pm; afternoon tea daily 2:30–4:30pm. Muni: No. 1-California bus or California St. cable car to the Fairmont Hotel.

5 CHINATOWN

MODERATE

Great Eastern Restaurant CHINESE The specialty here is seafood, which you can observe swimming around in tanks against the back wall. Dinner doesn't come fresher than this, so if you're in the mood for steamed whole rockfish, crab served in a dozen ways, shrimp, lobster, or whatever's in season, Great Eastern is the best choice in the 'hood. Just don't let the waiter steer you away from the fish tanks toward more "typical" Chinese-American fare; you'll get the same food you could have gotten for less at a corner Chinese takeout joint. That's what happened to us some years back when we were tourists in San Francisco—now we know better. Like the vast majority of Chinatown restaurants, this one has big tables for extended families. The basement dining room is comfortable, but we prefer the upstairs. One of the nice things about eating in Chinatown is that you're almost expected to have kids in tow.

649 Jackson St. (btw. Grant and Kearny sts.). ✆ **415/986-2500.** Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $11–$30. AE, MC, V. Daily 10am–1am. Muni: No. 15-3rd St. bus to Jackson St.

Bocadillos **15**
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Great Eastern Restaurant **13**
Hunan Home's Restaurant **12**
Il Pollaio **3**
Joe DiMaggio's Italian Chophouse **7**
Lichee Garden **9**
L'Osteria del Forno **4**
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Naan-N-Curry **14**
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Rose Pistola **6**
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Victoria Pastry Co. **10**

Fun Facts How to Tell Your Hakka from Your Hunan

Chinese cuisine comes in many guises. If the menu doesn't state what province the recipes hail from, can you tell your Shanghai from your Szechuan? Here's a little cheat sheet you can use to impress your kids.

- **Cantonese:** Most of the Chinese restaurants in this chapter fall into this category. In the wet, coastal province of Canton, seafood and vegetables grew in abundance. Cantonese food thus relies on fresh ingredients, which are mildly seasoned with flavors like ginger, soy sauce, and spring onions. Specialties include dim sum, noodles, seafood, and vegetable dishes.
- **Hakka:** Hakka peoples' ancestors settled in the less fertile, hilly regions of southern China. Their cuisine uses dried and preserved ingredients and little seafood. Specialties include salt-baked chicken, stuffed bean curd, and crispy meatballs.
- **Hunan:** Hot weather in the mountainous Hunan region called for strong spices to help preserve food and mask spoilage. Today refrigeration keeps food fresh, but Hunan's fondness for chili peppers, shallots, garlic, and other piquant flavors remains. Familiar dishes include stir-fries, sweet and sour chicken, and Hunan beef.
- **Mandarin:** Mandarin, or Northern Chinese, cuisine stems from the nation's capital, Beijing, and neighboring provinces. Specialties include Peking duck and hot and sour soup.
- **Shanghai:** Hailing from the eastern coast of China, Shanghai cuisine is noted for using a lot of alcohol and sugar, in addition to soy sauce. Specialties include drunken chicken and crispy shrimp balls.
- **Szechuan:** This western Chinese fare is well known for its spicy, flavorful seasonings. Chile pepper pastes and oils are liberally used as cooks strive to combine hot, sour, sweet, and salty tastes in dishes. Specialties include twice-cooked pork and tea leaf duck.

R&G Lounge ★ CHINESE When you walk into this favored joint at the edge of Chinatown, you've got two options: proceeding upstairs to the fancier dining room, or descending into the basement. If you have little ones with you, it's likely the host will send you downstairs. This troubled my husband greatly; the linoleum flooring, fluorescent lighting, and omnipresent mirrors of the downstairs dining room offended his aesthetic sensibilities. But the decor doesn't seem to bother most diners, who return time and again to R&G for authentically prepared Cantonese fare featuring lots of fresh seafood and plenty of meat dishes as well. Salt-and-pepper crab is a big hit, as is the smoky barbecued pork. Something about putting all the dishes on a big lazy Susan seems to encourage adventuresome dining, at least with my kids, who happily munched on all kinds of crab, pork, and noodle dishes. For a real conversation-stopper, call 24 hours in advance and order the sweet-rice-stuffed chicken.

631 Kearny St. (at Commercial St.). ✆ **415/982-7877.** www.rnglounge.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $7–$25 lunch, $10–$50 dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–9:30pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton bus.

INEXPENSIVE

Hunan Home's Restaurant CHINESE I was struck by a recent newspaper article stating that 39% of U.S. kids aged 10 to 13 surveyed said Chinese was their favorite type of food. My guess is these kids were thinking about well-known American-Chinese favorites like cashew chicken and sweet and sour pork when they answered the pollster. Well, Hunan Home's is made for them. I'm sure your kids will enjoy their meal as much as mine did at this place, which offers all the old favorites in abundance. Tired of Kung Pao chicken? Try Kung Pao squid. Even if you've seen it all before, rest assured that the quality will be high and the portions generous. The family dinner option includes egg rolls and wonton soup for $15 per person. There's also a fish tank the kids will enjoy—just don't tell them it's dinner.

622 Jackson St. (at Kearny St.). ✆ **415/982-2844.** http://hunanhome.citysearch.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $9–$30. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11:30am–9:30pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–10pm. Muni: No. 15-3rd St. bus to Jackson St.

Lichee Garden CHINESE This longtime, consistently good Cantonese restaurant is even a favorite among Chinatown residents. Lichee Garden's lengthy menu is filled with familiar items like egg foo young, sweet-and-sour pork, delicious wonton soup, and every other dish you remember from your childhood, assuming you weren't raised in China. The kitchen caters to those who can't make the leap from American broccoli to Chinese broccoli by offering both, but the menu includes more adventurous fare as well. The list of seafood showcases many scallop inventions, and live lobster and crab in season—both highly recommended. The excellent dim sum makes a great lunch option. Large and bright, the dining room has seen many families for the nearly three decades it's been open. Service is businesslike and you won't have to wait long for your meal. It's technically located one block north of Chinatown proper, but nowadays this area is essentially an extension of Chinatown.

1416 Powell St. (btw. Broadway and Vallejo sts.). ✆ **415/397-2290.** http://licheegarden.citysearch.com. Highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses $5.50–$20. MC, V. Daily 11am–9:15pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton or no. 45-Union-Stockton bus to Broadway.

6 THE EMBARCADERO/SOUTH BEACH

EXPENSIVE

Kokkari Estiatorio ★★★ GREEK This modern Greek restaurant provides a memorable and upscale dining experience that you can comfortably enjoy with kids. Although the subtle lighting, crowded bar, and roaring fire in the first room suggest a more adult establishment, don't be concerned. The expansive back room, made to feel warmer with the inclusion of heavy wood furniture and richly hued tapestries, is an ideal place for families and large parties. The cozy booths along the hall connecting the two rooms are also very suitable for diners with kids. The delectable menu is based on traditional Greek cuisine, but is inspired by the Bay Area's bounty of fresh, local ingredients and, as such, changes seasonally. At any time of the year, however, look for such house specialties as *moussaka* (eggplant and lamb casserole) and delectable lamb chops made with naturally raised Niman Ranch meat. The plate of traditional Greek spreads and pita bread is great for sharing, but is less inspired than some of the more exotic appetizers, such as fried zucchini cakes with yogurt-mint dressing, or crispy smelts with lemon and

Ferry Building Marketplace—Gourmet to Go

In this one building you'll find more top-quality lunch options than in many entire cities. In keeping with its role as the epic center of San Francisco's food scene (p. 161), the Ferry Building entails more than a biweekly farmers' market and esoteric gourmet shops selling the finest-grade olive oil, rare breed pork, or exotic fungi. Many of the city's best restaurants have lunch counters here, with scrumptious "to go" versions of their sit-down fare, and other shops proffer unusual, irresistible take-out goodies.

As you walk into the Ferry Building's main doors, just to the left you'll see **Lulu Petite** (Marketplace Shop #19; ✆ **415/362-7019**), a deli store offshoot of Restaurant Lulu (p. 112), with seasonal soups, hot quiches, and sandwiches like its superlative crispy chicken special, which sells for $9. Also near the main doors is **DELICArf-1** (Shop #45, ✆ **415/834-0344**) a Japanese deli where you can grab an organic bento boxed lunch and side dishes like sea weed salad or wasabi potato salad.

Down the main hall to the left is **Out the Door** (next to Slanted Door, Shop #5; ✆ **415/321-3740**), with a delectable Vietnamese take-away menu inspired by its famed sister restaurant Slanted Door (see below). Kids will love the spring rolls, $8 for an order, and the chicken steamed buns at $3 apiece. Near Out the Door is **Mistral Rotisserie Provencal** (Shop #41; ✆ **415/399-9751**), offering melt-in-your-mouth roasted meats, hot soups, and sandwiches with hearty plated meals at $6 to $13. The Ferry Building is also full of eateries with table seating. I described the most kid-friendly of these, **Taylor's Refresher** (p. 125) and **Mijita** (p. 125), separately below.

For dessert, it's hard to pass up the divine pastries at **Miette** (Shop #10; ✆ **415/837-0330**). Even harder to resist are the luscious frozen treats next door at **Ciao Bella Gelato** (Shop #8; ✆ **415/834-9330**), with inspired flavors like cinnamon oatmeal cookie or key lime with graham cracker swirl.

parsley. For finicky eaters, the kitchen can fix up a plate of buttered orzo pasta. The traditional spinach and cheese pastry *spanakopita* is a hit with my kids—and it's a great way to get them to eat their spinach.

200 Jackson St. (at Front St.). ✆ **415/981-0983.** www.kokkari.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $14.50–$29 lunch, $18.50–$39 dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm; Mon–Thurs 5:30–10pm; Fri 5:30–11pm; Sat 5–11pm. Muni: No. 10-Townsend to Jackson St., and then walk 2 blocks east.

Slanted Door ★★★ VIETNAMESE This may well be the most popular restaurant in San Francisco. No matter that it has twice relocated to bigger spaces, moving from its original site in the Mission to a larger space in the Embarcadero to its current location in an enormous corner of the Ferry Building. The huge space, overlooking the water and framed by walls of glass, is still nearly impossible to get into without reservations. Even the expansive bar area has an hour-long wait on weekend evenings. But fame has not made Charles Phan, the owner behind this success story, rest on his laurels. The restaurant continues to produce mouth-watering delicacies based on traditional Vietnamese dishes such

as shaking beef and lemon grass tofu, and the rave reviews keep pouring in. Although Bill Clinton did once dine with Chelsea at the Valencia Street location, this isn't necessarily a child-centered restaurant. Although chances are the kids will like the spring rolls with peanut sauce or chicken claypot with caramel sauce as much as you will, you now have two alternatives to the crowds and the scene at the Slanted Door. Mid-day you can order to-go from the lunch counter, **Out the Door,** around the corner from the restaurant and enjoy it out back with bay views or across the restaurant at the massive Vaillancourt fountain. Another "Out the Door," adjacent to the Westfield San Francisco Centre food court, offers diners the choice to eat their food in an understated undergr ound restaurant.

1 Ferry Bldg. #3 (at Embarcadero). ✆ **415/861-8032.** www.slanteddoor.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $11–$26 lunch, $16–$35 dinner. AE, MC, V. Lunch daily 11am–2:30pm; afternoon tea 2:30–5:30pm; dinner 5:30–10pm. Muni: F-Market streetcar.

MODERATE

Bocadillos ★ SPANISH/TAPAS Like many top cooks in San Francisco, lauded chef Gerald Hirigoyen was not content to have only high-end restaurants, like his Piperade, that only serves some of the people some of the time. At Bocadillos, the Basque-born Hirigoyen serves delectable bite-size tidbits (*bocadillos* means just that in Spanish: bite-size snacks) in a cozy, low-key dining room with a long, communal table serving as its centerpiece. Essentially, what you get here are tapas, and each is delightful, from the roasted peppers to the Catalan sausage to the lamb chops with mint chutney. While Bocadillos is casual and well priced, it may have too much of a boisterous after-work crowd for kids. Best to try it for lunch.

710 Montgomery St. (at Washington St.). ✆ **415/982-2622.** www.bocasf.com. Reservations not accepted. Tapas $3–$16. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Wed 7am–10pm; Thurs-Fri 7am–10:30pm; Sat 5–10:30pm. Muni: No. 12-Folsom to Pacific, and then walk 2 blocks south, or no. 15-3rd St. to Jackson St., and then walk 1 block south.

Fog City Diner AMERICAN A San Francisco institution immortalized in a Visa commercial, the Fog City Diner has quite a few things going for it: terrific location, fun metallic exterior, sleek wood interior, festive atmosphere, and great outdoor area. Because it's located near Levi's Plaza, kids can climb around the fountain on the opposite side of Battery Street or run around in the minipark next door. In fair weather, the outdoor seating lets you enjoy the bay views and green space. As for the food, the children are sure to be satisfied. The kids' menu features all the usual fare (hot dogs, grilled cheese, buttered noodles, three cheese quesadilla, kids' sundaes) and comes complete with a pack of crayons. The grown-up menu, on the other hand, tries a little too hard. Although it's nice that they've branched out from more common diner fare, some of the more inventive creations—such as mu shu pork burritos filled with stir-fried veggies—are not always as tasty as appear. You're best off sticking to the more basic items such as burgers or a "Cobb" sandwich.

1300 Battery St. (at Embarcadero). ✆ **415/982-2000.** www.fogcitydiner.com. Kids' menu, highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $14–$24; kids' menu all items $6.50. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri 11:30am–11pm; Sat 10:30am–11pm; Sun 10:30am–10pm. Muni: No. 10-Townsend bus or F-Market streetcar to Battery St., or no. 15-3rd St. to Jackson St., and then walk 1 block south.

Town's End ★ CALIFORNIA/BRUNCH Named after the street it's on, this low-key spot is in a part of town that really was once the "town's end," with little beyond it except warehouses and other industrial buildings. Now the little neighborhood of South Beach

has a lot going for it, including the cleaned-up waterfront, AT&T Park, new condominiums, and restaurants like this one. In addition to tasty, reasonably priced food, Town's End has a lovely, albeit small outdoor dining area. The kids can run around on the grass while you await your meal, but they may just want to stay put because the first thing that comes to the table is a basket full of house-baked goodies: muffins and scones at brunch, fresh breads and rolls at dinnertime. After that, feast on thick blueberry pancakes, creative omelets and frittatas, or organic salads. If you come for dinner, consider the prix-fixe meal, which includes an appetizer, main course, and dessert. (On Tues, the prix-fixe price is reduced, but beware the crowd.) Depending on the season, dinner offerings may include a New Mexico Caesar salad; ravioli with spinach, ricotta, and caramelized onions; or a naturally raised beef hamburger—served on a homemade roll, of course.

2 Townsend St. (at Embarcadero). ✆ **415/512-0749.** www.townsend-restaurant.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $6.50–$12 brunch, $11–$23 dinner; prix-fixe $22 ($18 on Tues). AE, DC, MC, V. Breakfast Tues–Fri 7:30–11am, lunch 11:30am–2pm, dinner Tues–Thurs 5:30–9pm and Fri–Sat 5:30–9:30pm; Sat–Sun 8am–2:30pm. Muni: N-Judah streetcar to Brannan Station, and then walk south toward Townsend St.

Yank Sing ★★ Finds CHINESE/DIM SUM For many San Francisco families, gathering with friends on a weekend morning over dim sum is a frequent occurrence. Families come together in groups of 6, 8, or 10 and seat themselves at a table, while servers carrying trays or pushing trolleys offer an assortment of bite-size Chinese delicacies, usually served three or four to a plate, for everyone to share. For years, we headed out to the Sunset to brunch at Ton Kiang, which I still recommend. But more recently we've made our way to Yank Sing, which gets my vote for best dim sum in the city. Yank Sing makes more than 100 varieties of dim sum, and serves at least 60 of them on any given day. Scallion prawns, stuffed crab claws, and snow pea shoot dumplings are among the possibilities—and the quality is always top-notch. While the price is higher than at Ton Kiang, if you eat at the Rincon Center location, you get the added bonus of dining inside a lovely atrium housing an 80-foot-high waterfall. The other good news is, since Yank Sing has two convenient downtown locations, you can always pop in during the week for lunch, a popular alternative for locals who work in the area.

One Rincon Center, 101 Spear St. (at Mission St.). ✆ **415/957-9300.** 49 Stevenson St. (alley btw. Market and Mission sts. and 1st and 2nd sts.). ✆ **415/541-4949.** www.yanksing.com. Highchairs. Reservations recommended. Dim sum $3.65–$10. AE, DC, MC, V. Rincon Center hours: Mon–Fri 11am–3pm; Sat, Sun, and holidays 10am–4pm. Stevenson St. hours: Daily 11am–3pm. Muni: F-Market streetcar. BART to Embarcadero St. (for Rincon Center) or Montgomery St. (for Stevenson St.).

INEXPENSIVE

In addition to the options below, you can find Osha Thai in this neighborhood (p. 137).

Amici's East Coast Pizzeria PIZZA Located across the street from AT&T Park, this is the second San Francisco location (the other is in Cow Hollow) of this regional pizza joint specializing in East Coast–style pizzas baked in wood-fired brick ovens. Although it's not my very favorite pizza in the city, it is pretty good, and there aren't too many other reasonably priced options near the ballpark. The menu features several other items as well, including an assortment of pastas, hearty sandwiches such as Italian sausage or eggplant parmigiana, and salads (the Caesar salad is quite tasty).With friendly waiters, crayons, and speedy service, what more could you need? Kids can get a mini cheese pizza for $7.75, or a small plate of plain noodles for just $2.50.

216 King St. (at 3rd St.). ✆ **415/546-6666.** Cow Hollow: 2200 Lombard St. (at Steiner St.). ✆ **415/885-4500.** www.amicis.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $8.25–$30. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri 11am–11pm; Sat 11:30am–11pm; Sun 11:30am–10pm. Muni: N-Judah streetcar to the 4th and King Station, and then walk ½ block east on King St.

Crossroads Café ★ CALIFORNIA/BREAKFAST Just a block off the Embarcadero, this cafe/bookshop with a fenced-in outdoor patio is a comfy haven for a snack, lunch, and a rest. Order turkey sandwiches, salads, smoked salmon plates, fountain treats, coffee drinks, and hot chocolate from the counter, and find a seat while you wait for your name to be called. This combined art gallery/bookstore cafe stocks a nice selection of children's books and gifts, and there are a few couches and overstuffed chairs to enjoy them in. The cafe makes all the desserts and pastries itself, which you can enjoy with more than 47 different types of teas.

699 Delancey St. (½ block south of Embarcadero). ✆ **415/836-5624.** Reservations not accepted. Main courses $5–$8. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 7am–10pm; Sun 8am–5pm. Muni: N- Judah streetcar to the Brannan Station, and then walk south toward Townsend St.

Mijita ★ Value MEXICAN Tracy desJardins, the talent behind this gem, is best known for her hyper-elegant establishment Jardiniere, which serves dinner to the black-tie set en route to the opera, symphony, or ballet. But when you've got kids to feed, not money to burn, this unpretentious joint serving simply prepared Mexican "street food" is a great way to enjoy desJardins' culinary talents. Not only will you get hearty morsels like a freshly grilled fish taco with cilantro-avocado cream or a *carnitas* taco with crisped braised pork at amazing prices (under $5), but you'll also enjoy a terrific view to boot. Located on the backside of the Ferry Building, Mijita looks out to the San Francisco Bay. Watch commuters catching ferries back home while you enjoy *"queso fundido,"* melted Mexican cheeses and chorizo sausage served with soft tortillas. If it's warm enough to sit outside, let the kids run around while you take your time sipping a cold beer and munching spiced pumpkin seeds. The two kids' items on the short menu, a bean and cheese burrito or a crispy cheese quesadilla, are sure to draw the *chicos* back when the food has arrived. The amazing part is the tiny bill. DesJardins is dedicated to supporting local farmers, fisherman, and ranchers who produce food sustainably. How she manages to do that and still serve $2 kids' burritos beats me . . . but who cares? Head back to the counter and order, "*Otra cerveza, por favor*!"

One Ferry Building, No. 44 (at the Embarcadero). ✆ **415/399-0814.** www.mijitasf.com. Highchairs. Reservations not accepted. Brunch main courses $6.50–$7. Lunch/dinner main courses $4–$5. Kids' menu $2. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 10am–7pm; Fri 10am–8pm; Sat 9am–8pm; Sun 10am–4pm. Muni: F-Market streetcar or any Market St. streetcar to Embarcadero Station.

Taylor's Refresher ★ Finds AMERICAN/HAMBURGERS This must be what diner food tasted like 50 years ago, when cows still roamed pastures and a tomato still tasted like a tomato. Eating here made me understand how diners got to be so popular in the first place. The hamburgers, made with local, naturally raised beef, are mouthwatering, and the sweet potato fries were a hit with my kids (I ordered them without the chili powder). Even the cherry tomatoes on the garden salad were sweet and delicate, not the tasteless, hard-skinned variety one expects at a typical diner. Then again, this diner isn't exactly typical. The first, and still existing, Taylor's Refresher was established in 1949 in the heart of the Napa Valley, with plenty of nearby family farms to draw on for fresh, local ingredients. This site, housed in the Ferry Building, takes advantage of the neighboring Farmer's Market for its raw materials. Despite the gourmet touch, the food still

comes on trays, the music is loud, and the price is right. On a sunny day, choose an outdoor table and order one of the awesome milk shakes or a root beer float—all made with San Francisco's luscious Double Rainbow ice cream.

1 Ferry Building (at Embarcadero). ✆ **866/328-3663.** www.taylorsrefresher.com. Highchairs. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $4–$14. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 10:30am–10pm. Muni: F-Market streetcar or any Market St. streetcar to Embarcadero Station.

7 NORTH BEACH

EXPENSIVE

Joe DiMaggio's Italian Chophouse ★ ITALIAN For a taste of old San Francisco, head to this new joint on the corner of Washington Park. Although it opened its doors in 2006, DiMaggio's will transport you back a half-century. The polished decor includes deep rich mahogany walls, generously sized plush leather booths, stunning Art Deco chandeliers, and, best of all, hundreds of black-and-white photographs of old San Francisco. You'll see photos of Joe and Marilyn (circa 1954) here, snapshots of besuited locals in fedora hats there, pictures of old baseball games around the corner. The dim lighting and stately bar make DiMaggio's feel quite adult, but the space accommodates all sorts of diners; the booths can easily fit a family of four and then some. I've seen other kids here who clearly enjoyed the experience.

In keeping with the old-time theme, portion sizes are definitely not nouvelle. While the menu contains enough new influences to keep it interesting, the servings are so generous I recommend sharing. The pork chop is large enough to feed two, and the potato gratin accompanying it measured a good 5 inches across. Salads like the tomato salad with shaved fennel and fried goat cheese are well executed, but not exactly a "light" start to a meal. The gnocchi and smoked chicken in cream sauce is as rich as you'd expect it to be, and twice as big. Nonetheless, desserts like the dreamy Frangelico cheesecake with a rich hazelnut cream are good enough to make room for.

601 Union St. (at Stockton St.). ✆ **415/421-5633.** www.joedimaggiosrestaurant.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $16–$38. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 5–11pm. Muni: Powell-Mason cable car to Union St., and then walk 2 blocks east, or no. 30-Stockton bus to Union St.

Rose Pistola ITALIAN Rose Pistola didn't start as a family-friendly restaurant, but perhaps its location in North Beach meant it had to get better at accommodating tourists who may have their kids in tow. That's good news for you, as it means you can enjoy the delightful offerings at this upscale Northern Italian establishment without feeling stressed about how the staff will react to the little ones. Your bigger worry will be getting a table at this ever-crowded hot spot, so make reservations or arrive early. The hot and cold antipasti may be the best thing on the menu: zucchini chips, roasted chili and garlic shrimp, and shaved artichoke salad are among the choices. Main courses highlight fish, pastas, and pizzas, and rotisserie grilled meats are also on offer.

532 Columbus Ave. (btw. Union and Green sts.). ✆ **415/399-0499.** www.rosepistolasf.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $17–$36. AE, MC, V. Daily lunch 11:30am–4pm; Sun–Thurs dinner 5:30–11pm; Fri–Sat dinner 5:30–midnight. Muni: Powell-Mason cable car to Union St., and then walk 2 blocks east, or no. 30-Stockton bus to Union St., and then walk 1 block east.

MODERATE

L'Osteria del Forno ★ ITALIAN A perennial favorite among in-the-know locals, L'Osteria seems to have as many people lining up outside as are actually seated inside. Once you have gotten a table, you'll appreciate the authentic, rustic feel in the cozy dining room. The terrific Italian dishes, which rank among the best in North Beach, include such delightful dishes as crepes filled with sautéed porcini mushrooms, ham, and béchamel sauce; and succulent skewered lamb marinated in ginger, rosemary, and garlic. If the kids are apt to be noisy, this tiny place may not be the best choice.

519 Columbus Ave. (btw. Union and Green sts.). ✆ **415/982-1124.** www.losteriadelforno.com. Reservations not accepted. Highchairs. Main courses $5–$19. No credit cards. Mon, Wed, Thurs, Sun 11:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–10:30pm. Closed Tues. Muni: Powell-Mason cable car to Union St., and then walk 2 blocks east, or no. 30-Stockton bus to Union St., and then walk 1 block east.

Trattoria Contadina ★ Finds ITALIAN So you brought the kids to North Beach and you just want a nice Italian restaurant where you can have a tasty, reasonably priced meal? And each tiny restaurant is already full and the street is jammed with other hungry-looking tourists? Here's a hint: Get away from the crowds and start heading up Union Street (and I do mean "up"—the hill is quite steep) 2 blocks to this quaint, family-owned eatery. Trattoria Contadina isn't exactly spacious, and you may still wait if you don't have reservations, but the restaurant does have more tables and a more welcoming feel than many of its counterparts on Columbus Street. In keeping with the ma-and-pa atmosphere, the food is hearty and no nonsense. The linguini with co-owner Anna Maria's homemade Italian meatballs will take you back to your own childhood, and the spinach, meat- and cheese-filled ravioli, served in a porcini mushroom cream sauce, is rich and delicious. There's no kids' menu, but the kitchen will happily serve up half orders at this very family-friendly trattoria.

1800 Mason St. (at Union St.). ✆ **415/982-5728.** www.trattoriacontadina.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $14–$27. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 5–9pm; Fri–Sat 5–9:30pm. Muni: Powell-Mason cable car to Union St., or no. 30-Stockton bus to Union St., and then walk west (up) 2 blocks.

INEXPENSIVE

In addition to the options below, you can find a Pasta Pomodoro in this neighborhood (p. 137).

Gelato Classico ICE CREAM These tiny stores make gelato that's nearly as delicious as what you might have in Rome. The gelato is so rich and creamy, it's best had neat. But if you can't resist going all out, how about the "Coppa Carmelita," dark chocolate and hazelnut gelato covered in a luscious caramel sauce?

576 Union St. (btw. Stockton and Grant sts.). ✆ **415/391-6667.** No credit cards. Cups $3.25–$4.65. Sun–Thurs noon–10pm; Fri–Sat noon–11pm. Muni: Powell-Mason cable car to Union St., and then walk 2 blocks east, or no. 30-Stockton bus to Union St., and then walk 1 block east.

Il Pollaio ★ GRILL At Il Pollaio, located across the street from Washington Square Park, a table by an open window, a fragrant roast chicken, and a mixed salad speak of a gentle end to a good day. In addition to the signature chicken, you'll also see steak, pork chops, lamb chops, rabbit, and sausages on the grill. Beyond that, Il Pollaio offers a few salads, soup, and just two sides: french fries and marinated eggplant. Daily specials, consisting of roasted meat with fries and a salad, are the way to go.

Sandwich Bars & Picnic Spots

An urban picnic could be an adventure, or at least a novelty. To start, hunt for sandwiches at **Specialty's Café and Bakery** (✆ **877/502-2837;** 505 Sansome St. at Clay St., and many other Financial District locations). Specialty's bakes its own bread and offers deli-style sandwiches with some inventive options such as Thai chicken and turkey curry. Want organic? Head to **Soup Freaks** (✆ **415/433-7687;** 200 Pine St., at Battery St., and 90 New Montgomery St. at Mission St.), where the soups, salads and sandwiches are made with all-natural, sustainable ingredients. Once you've packed your bag, you're ready to head to the half-acre redwood grove by the **Transamerica Building** (600 Montgomery St. at Clay St.). The cool shade of the majestic redwood trees and playful sculptures will make your picnic in this treasured oasis even more enjoyable. If you're in SoMa, stop by **A G Ferrari Foods** on 688 Mission St. (✆ **415/344-0644**) to pick up delectable Italian sandwiches on fresh focaccia bread. Then head to **Yerba Buena Gardens** (p. 163) for an urban retreat.

Picnicking by the water may be an even better idea. Go to the **Ferry Building** (p. 161) on the Embarcadero and purchase sandwiches from **Mastrelli's Delicatessen** (✆ **415/397-3354**). Then go out behind the building, grab a bench, and enjoy your picnic as you watch the ferries head out across the bay. Another good picnic spot is the Justin Herman Plaza across the street from the Ferry Building, where the massive concrete arms of Vaillancourt Fountain fold over each other. At Fort Mason, pick up delicious vegetarian sandwiches like egg salad at **Greens to Go** (Building A, Fort Mason Center, ✆ **415/771-6330**) and then sit yourselves under a palm tree on the expansive lawn. If you're at **Crissy Field** (p. 160), grab a soup or sandwich at the Warming Hut. You'll find plenty of picnic spots outside.

North Beach provides more sources for filling your hamper. **Molinari,** 373 Columbus Ave. at Vallejo Street (tel] **415/421-2337**), is an Italian delicatessen with a fantastic assortment of imported foodstuffs and friendly staff who will create delicious, everything-on-'em sandwiches to go. Also consider takeout from **Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store** (reviewed below). You can't pass on dessert if you're anywhere near **Victoria Pastry Co.,** 1362 Stockton St. at Vallejo (✆ **415/781-2015**). The chewy almond cookies are divine, as are the cakes, all sold by the slice or whole. You may be able to find a bench in Washington Square Park if you can't wait to dig into your lunch. Otherwise, head to **North Beach Playground** at Lombard and Mason streets, where you'll find picnic facilities and a playground.

If you're headed out to Lincoln Park in the Richmond District, a convenient stop is **Angelina's Bakery** at 6000 California St., at 22nd Avenue (✆ **415/221-7801**). Pick up sandwiches, salads, or quiches and hop back on the no. 1-California bus to 32nd Street. Then walk north 2 blocks to Eagle's Point at the end of the Land 's End trail. Enjoy your picnic with a priceless view of the Marin Headlands and western side of the Golden Gate Bridge.

555 Columbus Ave. (btw. Union and Green sts.). ✆ **415/362-7727.** Reservations not accepted. Highchairs. Main courses $12–$17. MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–9pm. Muni: Powell-Mason cable car or no. 30-Stockton bus to Union St.

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store ITALIAN This corner storefront could truthfully be called Mario's Bohemian Shoebox, it's so small. Gone are the days when you could find a cigar on the premises, much less smoke one; instead, Mario's has been serving big, warm focaccia sandwiches filled with meatballs or breaded chicken cutlets, pizzas, salad, and drinks for more than 20 years. Grab a seat at the funky wooden counter and watch the waitress efficiently fill the drink orders while the cook prepares the food in a miniature oven. Kids will love the Torani Italian syrups used to make sodas. You can also get the sandwiches to go, to enjoy them in Washington Park across the street.

566 Columbus Ave. (at Union St.). ✆ **415/362-0536.** Highchairs, boosters. Main courses $4.50–$8.50. MC, V. Daily 11am–11pm. Muni: Powell-Mason cable car or no. 30-Stockton bus to Union St.

Naan-N-Curry Value INDIAN/PAKISTANI When San Franciscans want good, inexpensive Indian/Pakistani food, they come to Naan-N-Curry. Flavorful tandoori-oven-baked meats, delightful curries, a great selection of vegetarian options, and plenty of naan breads are on offer here. Although some dishes can be too spicy for younger kids, we've found a few items that even our young daughters love, including chicken tikka masala, which is cooked in a mild yogurt sauce, and vegetable biryani, or vegetables with rice. With a casual atmosphere and hearty portions for just pennies, it's worth branching out from pizza, noodles, and the other usual suspects.

533 Jackson St. (at Columbus Ave.). ✆ **415/693-0499.** Reservations not accepted. Highchairs, boosters. Main courses $4–$10. MC, V. Mon–Fri 11am–10pm; Sat noon–10pm. Muni: No. 15 bus to Jackson St. Also at 690 Van Ness Ave. (at Turk St.) ✆ **415/775-1349.**

8 FISHERMAN'S WHARF

EXPENSIVE

Ana Mandara VIETNAMESE The moment you walk through the doors of this serene restaurant, you are transported to Vietnam—or at least a movie set of it. The interior includes facades of a Vietnamese-style home and a French colonial building, palm trees, and other Indochinese artifacts. Yet the 18-foot-high black ceiling is dotted with spotlights, as if to remind you that this is not Vietnam, but a replica of it. The food seems to follow suit. Appetizers such as crispy rolls with crab, shrimp, and shiitake mushrooms and entrees such as tournedos of beef tenderloin with onions and pepper cress are very tasty, but seem firmly grounded on this continent—which may be just as well for the little ones among you. Although there is no children's menu, kids do enjoy the beef tournedos, as well as the side of garlic noodles. There are a few truly exotic options, like the luscious mango soup with durian sorbet, which is a must-have for dessert. The dinner menu edges this restaurant into the expensive category, but lunch prices are more moderate, with main courses starting at $14.

891 Beach St. (at Polk St.). ✆ **415/771-6800.** www.anamandara.com. High chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses lunch $14–$28, dinner $21–$40. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri lunch 11:30am–2pm; Sun–Thurs dinner 5:30–9:30pm; Fri–Sat 5:30–10:30pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton bus to Polk St., and then walk 1 block north, or Powell-Hyde cable car to Beach St., and then walk 2 blocks west.

Franciscan AMERICAN/SEAFOOD It's all about the view here, which explains the upside-down nature of this oddly shaped, peach-colored structure. Stairs lead you from the crowded wharf below into a welcoming dining room, which offers bay views from practically every table. Given its location in the most heavily touristed part of town, you'll pay more than you should for a crab cake appetizer ($12) or slice of halibut ($26), but you do get a fabulous vista, friendly service, and better fare than at most restaurants in the vicinity. The pasta and sandwiches come in at under $20, and all kids' menu items are $5. The kids' fish and chips is big enough for adults and comes with crayons and drawing materials. I wouldn't go out of my way to eat here, but if you want a nice lunch without having to leave the neighborhood, the Franciscan may be worth the higher prices.

Pier 43 1/2 (at Embarcadero). ✆ **415/362-7733.** www.franciscanrestaurant.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses $10–$50; kids' menu $5. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11am–11pm. Muni: F-Market streetcar to Mason St.

McCormick & Kuleto's ★ AMERICAN/SEAFOOD I'm not usually into extra-large restaurants with massive menus smack dab in the most touristy parts of town. But this establishment, which brings well-known local restaurateur Pat Kuleto together with the nationally renowned McCormick & Schmick's seafood restaurant chain, keeps high standards. Overlooking the lovely Hyde Street Pier, with Alcatraz in the background, it has one of the best views in all of San Francisco and is a good stand-by for visiting grandparents. The options are not especially inventive—cedar plank–smoked Alaskan salmon and griddled Parmesan-coated petrale sole are typical dishes—but they are fresh and well prepared. Although the menu is dominated by seafood, it's so long that there are still plenty of choices for the fish-averse. The kids' menu includes a tasty fish and chips plate that you'll want to polish off if your little one doesn't manage to. Be sure to come in daylight to enjoy the view, but don't expect a quick meal—service can be slow.

900 North Point St. (btw. Larkin and Polk sts.). ✆ **415/929-1730.** www.mccormickandschmicks.com. Kids' menu, highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses $13–$40; kids' menu $5.35–$7.75. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–11pm; Sun 10:30am–10pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton bus to Larkin St., and then walk 1 block north, or Powell-Hyde cable car to Beach St., and then walk 1 block west.

Rainforest Cafe Overrated AMERICAN The phony flowers and plastic rainforest complete with waterfall, aquarium, and African music in the background just cry out for a B ticket (for those of you old enough to remember how things once worked at Disneyland). The food at this merchandised-to-the-hilt restaurant is strictly pedestrian: a little fish, a little chicken, a hamburger, a steak—something for everyone. With 500 seats, however, you're going to get production-line quality. The draw here is the decor, but my suggestion is that if you want the fun of a tropical storm, head for the Tonga Room at the Fairmont Hotel. There, for a lot less money, treat the kids to snacks and an umbrella-bedecked drink with benign rainstorms on the half-hour.

145 Jefferson St. (next to the Wax Museum). ✆ **415/440-5610.** www.rainforestcafe.com. Kids' menu, highchairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $11–$29; kids' menu $6–7. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11am–9pm; Fri 11am–10pm; Sat 11am–11pm. Muni: F-Market streetcar to Mason St.

MODERATE

Blue Mermaid Chowder House AMERICAN/SEAFOOD Blue Mermaid offers a no-nonsense menu of chowders, sandwiches, salads, and a few bigger main course options at pretty reasonable prices. The decor plays on the restaurant's location in The

Cannery, with boats suspended from the ceiling, heavy wood columns wrapped in shipping rope, and hand-painted posters depicting advertisements of long-gone canned fish and produce exporters. Outdoor seating in the lovely Cannery courtyard is also available. Kids' meals, like fish sticks or hot dogs, are served up with french fries in blue beach buckets. ***Tip:*** Stick to the traditional chowders, like the Manhattan or New England, which are tastier than the restaurant's much touted Dungeness corn and crab chowder.

471 Jefferson St. (at Hyde St.). ✆ **415/771-2222.** www.bluemermaidsf.com. Kids' menu, highchairs, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses $9–$25; kids' menu $6.95. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 7am–9pm; Fri–Sat 7am–10pm. Muni: Powell-Hyde cable car to Beach St., and then walk 1 block north.

Cafe Pescatore ITALIAN You could probably pay less for Italian fare a few blocks away in North Beach, but this is the wharf, after all. Given the alternatives, this trattoria located on one corner of the Tuscan Inn hotel looks downright appealing. Floor-to-ceiling windows open onto heated sidewalk seating, but there's no ocean view here (the waterfront is 2 blocks away). Menu highlights include Caesar salad, wood-fired pizza, and plenty of pasta options. Order simply, and you'll do fine. The kids' menu includes pasta or pizza, which kids can have plain, with sausage, or with another topping of their choice.

2455 Mason St. (at North Point St.). ✆ **415/561-1111.** www.cafepescatore.com. Kids' menu, highchairs, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses $8.75–$17 lunch, $9–$22 dinner; kids' menu $3.25–$6.95. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 7am–10:30am, 11:30am–10pm; Sat–Sun 7am–10pm;. Muni: F-Market streetcar to Mason St., and then walk 1 block south.

INEXPENSIVE

Ghirardelli Ice Cream and Chocolate Shop ICE CREAM There's a reason for the ever-present line here: Ghirardelli makes a good product. If you haven't ever had a Ghirardelli brownie, order one under a scoop of ice cream.

Ghirardelli Sq., 900 North Point St. ✆ **415/474-3938.** www.ghirardelli.com. Desserts $5–$9. Sun–Thurs 9am–11pm; Fri–Sat 9am–midnight; Ice Cream shop opens at 10am. Muni: No. 30-Stockton bus to Larkin St., and then walk 1 block north, or Powell-Hyde cable car to Beach St., and then walk 1 block west.

In-N-Out Burger HAMBURGERS Having spent my teenage years in California, I can tell you that In-N-Out is a statewide phenomenon. Fans who insist it's the best fast food anywhere tell me what makes the burgers so good are the toasted buns, crisp lettuce, and fresh tomatoes. They also swoon over the extra-crisp, extra-thin fries, which are, in addition to a grilled-cheese sandwich, the only vegetarian option on the very short menu.

333 Jefferson St. (btw. Jones and Leavenworth sts.). ✆ **800/786-1000.** www.in-n-out.com. Main courses $2–$3. No credit cards. Sun–Thurs 10:30am–1am, Fri–Sat 10:30am–1:30am. Muni: F-Market streetcar to Jefferson and Taylor sts.

Norman's Ice Cream & Freezes ★ Finds ICE CREAM Although I list the Ghirardelli above, it's not really our favorite ice creamery in the Wharf. So if you're at Ghirardelli Square and your kids espy the long line of people waiting for chocolate sundaes, don't despair. You needn't spend your next hour queued up. Just point your kids downhill and start heading northeast. As you reach The Cannery, you'll see a Ben & Jerry's, but keep on walking. Turn into the peaceful courtyard of The Cannery and there you'll find Norman's, purveyor of delicious, locally made ice cream in an unhurried and friendly fashion. Norman serves Mitchell's ice cream, the best in San Francisco, and you don't need to trek out to the Mission to get it. While he doesn't carry as many flavors as the Mitchell's store itself, he does offer quite a few, including coconut, Kahlúa mocha cream, mango, and even green tea—all so rich and creamy they put other ice creams to shame.

And, of course, Norman gladly makes sundaes as well. But if you're feeling adventurous, consider the Halo-Halo, a Filipino concoction made with sweet beans and shaved ice.

2801 Leavenworth St. The Cannery (Jefferson St., btw. Hyde and Jones sts.). ✆ **415/346/3046.** 1 scoop $3; 2 scoops $5.25. No credit cards. Daily 11am–10pm.; summers open daily 11am–11pm. Muni: Powell-Hyde cable car to Beach St., and then walk 1 block north.

San Francisco Crepe Cart ★ Finds CREPES A few of these crepe carts are scattered about Fisherman's Wharf, but this one is my favorite due to its location in the charming, brick-lined courtyard of The Cannery, adjacent to a small outdoor stage. Order a ham and cheese or spinach and goat cheese crepe, grab a table under the shade of a tree, and enjoy a quick, inexpensive meal accompanied by live music. Our kids love to listen to the jazz or folk musicians who play there regularly. For dessert, share a chocolate and banana or simple powdered sugar crepe.

The Cannery (Jefferson St., btw. Hyde and Jones sts.). Crepes $4.50–$7.50. No credit cards. Daily 10am–6pm. Muni: Powell-Hyde cable car to Beach St., and then walk 1 block north.

9 CIVIC CENTER/HAYES VALLEY

EXPENSIVE

Hayes Street Grill ★ CALIFORNIA/SEAFOOD Chef-owner Patricia Unterman, the author of the *Food Lover's Guide to San Francisco,* is pretty much the authority on the local culinary scene—so it's no surprise her restaurant serves delicious, uncomplicated dishes that showcase local, in-season ingredients. The specialty here is very fresh fish: whatever's been caught that morning will be prepared simply and with integrity and be accompanied with crisp, thin fries. All sauces are thoughtfully served on the side. The non-fish selections, such as the grass-fed steak with mustard butter and balsamic onions, are equally flavorful. The atmosphere balances between informal and businesslike, with a clientele of politicians and professionals at lunch and artists and audiences eating a pre-show dinner. At lunch, kids might enjoy eating at the bar; it's situated in the front and commands a view of many tables and the door, so they can keep tabs on what's going on.

320 Hayes St. (btw. Gough and Franklin sts.). ✆ **415/863-5545.** www.hayesstreetgrill.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $16–$25 lunch; $22–$28 dinner; $31 prix-fixe dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2pm lunch; Mon–Thurs 5–9pm; Fri 5–10pm; Sat 5:30–10pm; Sun 5–8:30pm; Sun–Thurs after 7:30pm prix-fixe dinner. Muni: No. 21-Hayes bus to Franklin St. or any streetcar to Franklin St., and then walk north 3 blocks.

Zuni Cafe ★ CALIFORNIA/MEDITERRANEAN For nearly three decades, Zuni Cafe has served Mediterranean-infused California cuisine in this spacious, sunny, location. The whitewashed walls and two-story-high south-facing windows combine with odd angles, heavy wood, and exposed brick to give a casual, airy feel to the place. The eclectic, inventive, and always delicious cuisine from famed chef-owner Judy Rodgers (which can also be found in her fabulous 500-plus page cookbook) changes regularly, but her signature roast chicken with bread salad is always on the otherwise very short menu. It's no wonder this place still draws a crowd after all these years. Although there is no children's menu, the kitchen is always happy to whip up a special concoction. Whatever you do get for the kids, make sure it comes with the shoestring potatoes.

1685 Market St. (btw. Gough and Franklin sts.). ✆ **415/552-2522.** www.zunicafe.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $10–$19 lunch, $14–$39 dinner. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 11:30am–midnight; Sun 11am–11pm. Muni: F-Market streetcar to Gough St.

MODERATE

Citizen Cake ★ BAKERY/CALIFORNIA When you walk into this cafe, you are faced with such a fetching array of cakes, tarts, cookies, pastries, and ice creams that all thought of the food pyramid dissipates as you grapple with the mind-bending question: *What do I choose?* You can take time to figure that out while drooling at the counter or sitting at one of the tables in the austere room, where ample windows keep you in touch with the street action. Brunch is a good time to eat here, as it will give you an excuse to order their homemade donuts. But you're best off making it a teatime treat. Lunch and dinner menus may be too esoteric and pricey for a family meal—and dinner pushes Citizen Cake into the expensive category.

399 Grove St. (at Gough St.). ✆ **415/861-2228.** www.citizencake.com. Highchairs. Reservations for brunch recommended. Main courses $10–$13 lunch, $22–$26 dinner. AE, MC, V. Lunch Tues–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm; dinner Tues–Sat 5pm–10pm; brunch Sat–Sun 10am–2:30pm. Muni: No. 21-Hayes bus to Gough St., and then walk 1 block north to Grove St., or streetcar to Van Ness St. Station, and then walk 3 blocks north to Grove St. and 2 blocks west to Gough St.

INEXPENSIVE

Arlequin SANDWICHES Opened by the owners of nearby Absinthe, a swanky restaurant for the pre-theater set, Arlequin serves the needs of hungry shoppers, sightseers, and local merchants in search of a nice, simple lunch in a lovely setting. Order a homemade soup, a flavorful sandwich with a gourmet touch—think roasted chicken with tangy aioli—or a freshly made salad and head out to the surprisingly pleasant and serene garden out back . . . or at least it will be serene until the kids start running amok. (Well, better outside than inside.)

384 Hayes St. (btw. Franklin and Gough sts.) ✆ **415/626-1211.** Highchairs, boosters. Main items about $10. AE, V, MC. Mon–Fri 8am–8pm; Sat 9am–8pm; Sun 9am–5pm. Muni: No. 12-Hayes bus to Gough St., or streetcar to Van Ness Station.

Frjtz BELGIAN FRIES/CREPES Among the hip boutiques and antique shops of Hayes Valley is this funky teahouse specializing in fries. Thick and crispy, and wrapped in a paper cone just like you get on the streets of Brussels, the starchy wedges are best eaten when they're as hot as your fingers can handle. The inventive dipping sauces include kalamata-caper ketchup, miso mayo, and spic-y ogurt peanut. If you feel guilty just feeding your kids fries for lunch, you can order them salads, sandwiches, or crepes, all of which are named after artists. Another location is in the Mission.

581 Hayes St. (at Laguna St.). ✆ **415/864-7654.** www.frjtzfries.com. Fries $3.25–$4.75. Main courses $7–$14. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 9am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11am–midnight; Sun 11am–9pm. Muni: No. 21-Hayes bus to Laguna St., or streetcar to Van Ness St. Station, and then walk 2 blocks north to Hayes and then east to Laguna St. Mission: 590 Valencia St. (at 17th St.) ✆ **415/863-8272.** Muni: BART to 16th St.

10 MARINA/COW HOLLOW/PRESIDIO

EXPENSIVE

Greens ★★ VEGETARIAN The setting is so lovely and the food so good at this vegetarian spot, even dedicated carnivores will enjoy it. Built by the San Francisco Zen Center in a converted warehouse, the restaurant boasts very high ceilings and a wall of windows that frames a stunning view of a marina, the bay, and the Golden Gate Bridge. Come in the early evening, and you'll be rewarded with a glorious sunset as well.

One taste of the delectable offerings, and you may decide meat is overrated. Start with baked goat cheese with grilled bread and golden beets, and follow it with risotto with snap, snow, and English peas, or yellow vegetable curry with cashew jasmine rice. For dessert, how about a warm fruit cobbler with buttermilk ice cream? Vegan appetizers, entrees, and desserts—like egg-free, dairy-free chocolate mousse—are also available. Most nights are a la carte, but on Saturday night a $49 four-course prix-fixe dinner is served. Some folks gripe that meatless fare should be less expensive, but I feel Greens' prices are in line with vegetarian options at any upscale restaurant. If you can't get a table at lunchtime, pick up sandwiches from the Greens to Go takeout counter and have a picnic overlooking the bay.

Building A, Fort Mason (at Bay St.). ✆ **415/771-6222.** www.greensrestaurant.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $8–$14 lunch, $16–$23 dinner; prix-fixe (Sat night only) $49. AE, DISC, MC, V. Lunch Tues–Sat noon–2:30pm; dinner Sun–Fri 5:30–9pm; Sat prix-fixe dinner 5:30–9pm; brunch Sun 10:30am–2pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton bus to Laguna St. and transfer to the no. 28 bus to Fort Mason.

Presidio Social Club AMERICAN One of a handful of restaurants in the lovely Presidio National Park, this old army barracks has been revamped to feel like a charming 1930's officers' club. Weathered window shutters, potted plants and a white-washed interior provide an airy, friendly feel that makes families feel welcome—provided they come for a weekend brunch or early in the evening, before the bar fills up with adults swigging classic cocktails. The American "comfort food" menu offers plenty of options for the little ones, like fish and chips or an extra-fancy sloppy Joe's made with American Kobe-style beef. Other nostalgic menu items, for those so inclined, include liver and onions or beef Stroganoff on egg noodles. Mashed potatoes, corn on the cob, and sautéed spinach are typical sides. More adventurous eaters can look to the appetizer menu for inspiration; they'll find tuna poke, steak tartare, and even shrimp fritters guaranteed to be too spicy for young palates. My family and I like the Presidio Social Club for its location inside the national park and for its fun, old-time feel. Although some menu items are quite tasty, we wouldn't come here for the food alone.

Building 563 Rutger St. (in the Presidio, just inside the Lombard Gate). ✆ 415/885-1888. www.presidiosocialclub.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $18–$23 dinner, $10–$16 brunch. V, MC, AE. Dinner Sun–Thurs 5:30–9:30pm; Fri–Sat 5:30–10:30pm; brunch Sat–Sun 10am–2pm. Muni: No. 43-Masonic bus to Lombard and Lyon sts. Walk through Lombard Gate into Presidio; restaurant uphill to the left.

MODERATE

A16 ★★ ITALIAN/PIZZA This hopping Chestnut Street locale quickly established itself in the Bay Area's dining scene. It's named after the motorway that transverses the Italian region of Campania, home to Naples. As one might expect, A16's most acclaimed specialty is its wood-oven-fired Neapolitan pizza, which could blow away your youngsters' preconceptions of what pizza is all about. Order a "pizza marinara," with just tomato, oregano, garlic, and olive oil, and they'll be amazed that something without melted cheese could taste so good. Of course, there are mozzarella-topped pizzas as well. The rest of the menu is also impressive (and changes seasonally). Dishes like house-made fennel sausage with grilled bread or wild salmon with basil, almonds, and lemon are deliciously inspired by southern Italian cuisine. For dessert, your options might include ricotta almond mousse or warm chocolate hazelnut cake. Although the menu is more limited at lunch, it may be the best time to bring younger children. They'll enjoy watching the pizzas being made or drawing on the paper-covered tables. The dinner scene is usually too noisy and grown-up for all but the hippest teenagers.

2355 Chestnut St. (btw. Scott and Divisadero sts.). ✆ **415/771-2216.** www.a16sf.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $6–$16 lunch, $10–$25 dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Wed–Fri lunch 11:30am–2:30pm; Sun–Thurs dinner 5–10pm; Fri–Sat 5–11pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton bus to Scott St.

Betelnut ASIAN When you first approach Betelnut, you may ask yourself why you've brought kids. The entire front of the restaurant opens out onto the sidewalk, where you'll find trendy 20- and 30-somethings sipping cocktails and nibbling on pan-Asian appetizers. Behind them lies a long bar and, off to the right, steps leading back to a dimly lit restaurant. But despite the boisterous, bar-like atmosphere, the restaurant is actually a very welcoming, low-key hangout that's become a neighborhood institution. Many local families bring their kids here regularly. The kids don't seem to mind the dark exterior, and the vibrant atmosphere (this is definitely a place for groups, not couples) will drown out any child whining about having spent the entire day sightseeing. Kids all love the chicken satays, but ask for the peanut sauce on the side, as it's mildly spicy. The Cecilia's minced chicken in lettuce cups and the Shanghai steamed chicken dumplings are also a hit with the kids. If the adults want something with a little more zing, try the five-spiced firecracker shrimp.

2030 Union St. (btw. Buchanan & Webster sts.). ✆ **415/929-8855.** www.betelnutrestaurant.com. Kids menu, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses $9.50–$21. DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–midnight. Muni: No. 41-Union or no. 45-Union-Stockton.

La Terrasse ★ FRENCH There's hardly a better way to end an excursion to the Presidio than with an early dinner at La Terrasse, located in a stand-alone building within the Presidio National Park. While San Francisco's fickle weather makes alfresco dining less common than one might hope, La Terrasse offers glass walls and heat lamps to protect outdoor diners from chilly winds and guarantee a cozy meal. Despite a French bistro menu not created with families in mind, La Terrasse is certainly the most kid-friendly restaurant in the Presidio and one to which we've taken our children several times. The kids usually have wood-oven fired pizzas or the onion soup, while we adults order lighter fare like the salad Nicoise or sautéed prawns. If you're extra hungry, the grilled hamburger with Roquefort or the rack of lamb is sure to leave you without room for dessert. ***Note:*** The outdoor seating fills up fast, so call ahead and specifically ask to eat outside and/or arrive early, as in 5pm. Service can be slow so, if you come for lunch, don't get frustrated that the meal is cutting into your afternoon sightseeing time. Either order "to go" sandwiches and picnic at Crissy Field or grab a table, order a glass of wine, and enjoy the fresh air.

215 Lincoln Blvd. (in the Presidio, btw. Montgomery St. and Funston Ave.). ✆ 415/922-3463. www.laterrassepresidio.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $14–$29, $8–$29 brunch. AE, V, MC, DISC, DC. Continental breakfast Mon–Fri 7–11am; Mon–Sat 11am–4pm and 5–10pm; brunch Sun 10am–4pm. Muni: Muni: No. 43-Masonic bus to Letterman Dr. and Lincoln Blvd.

Mamacita ★ MEXICAN Disregard any preconceived notions of Mexican cuisine that those Tex-Mex chain restaurants have impressed on your psyche. This hip addition to the Chestnut Street dining scene serves up inventive, intensely flavorful Latin dishes prepared with top-quality ingredients like ultra-fresh seafood, naturally raised beef, and handmade tortillas. The carnitas made with slow-cooked pulled pork and the Mexican gulf prawns sautéed with jalapenos, smoked bacon, and roasted tomato–coconut milk are luscious possibilities. The kids' menu quesadilla is big and tasty, and the freshly made chips and guacamole are so good you could make a meal of them—but it would be a shame to miss the better offerings to come. Be warned: You'll find plenty of families dining in the early hours, but Mamacita's impressive selection of tequilas draws its fair share of margarita-swilling revelers later in the evening.

2317 Chestnut St. (btw. Scott and Divisadero sts.). ✆ **415/346-8494.** www.mamacitasf.com. Kids menu, highchairs, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses $10–$18; kids' menu $6–$8. AE, MC, V. Sun–Wed 5:30–10pm; Thurs–Sat 5:30–10:30pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton bus to Scott St.

INEXPENSIVE

In addition to the options below, you can find an Amici's East Coast Pizzeria in this neighborhood (p. 124).

Dragon Well ★ Finds CHINESE Dragon Well was established with the idea of serving light, fresh, flavorful, and reliably good Chinese food. It has succeeded. This is definitely west coast Chinese, the Tex-Mex of Asian food, but it's the best rendition of it I've had. Traditional favorites like pork-filled pot stickers (a big hit with my kids) and cashew chicken are exceptionally well executed, and the tea-smoked duck, served in a bun with plum sauce, is not to be missed. Owned by a friendly and talented local mom, Dragon Well is probably the favorite takeout destination for most local families. The interior decor—spacious and airy, in keeping with the light and healthful food—makes Dragon Well an inviting place to eat in as well. I'm confident everyone in your family will enjoy his or her meal at Dragon Well.

2142 Chestnut St. (btw. Steiner and Pierce sts.). ✆ **415/474-6888.** www.dragonwell.com. Highchairs, boosters. Main courses $7.50–$8.50 lunch; $8–$12 dinner. MC, V. Daily 11:30am–10pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton bus to Steiner St.

The Grove ★ AMERICAN/BREAKFAST On weekends, families regularly hit the Grove for lunch. With a wooded interior, an eclectic assortment of tables and chairs, windows that open up like terrace doors, lots of plants, and plenty of outdoor seating, it's simply one of the most agreeable places to hang out on a sunny day. The menu is equally pleasing, with breakfast options like hot oatmeal with brown sugar and fruit or a breakfast burrito with guacamole and sour cream. Lunch options include fresh salads and unique sandwiches, like the Cuban pork or the turkey with chipotle mayo. Kids will enjoy the cheese quesadilla or the homemade macaroni and cheese. Another location is in the Pacific Heights neighborhood.

2250 Chestnut St. (at Alma St., btw. Scott and Pierce sts.). ✆ **415/474-4843.** Pacific Heights: 2016 Fillmore St. (btw. California and Pine sts.) ✆ **415/474-1419.** Highchairs, boosters. Main courses $7–$10. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 7am–11pm; Sat–Sun 8am–11pm. Muni: No. 30-Stockton bus to Scott St.

Mel's Drive-in HAMBURGERS The original Mel's was opened in 1947 on Van Ness Avenue by Mel Weiss. It was demolished 25 years later, but not before George Lucas filmed *American Graffiti* there. In 1985 Mel's son Steven opened a new Mel's on Lombard Street but kept the old 1950s theme, complete with booths, chrome, and tabletop jukeboxes. He eventually opened three more San Francisco locations and a smattering elsewhere in the state. The food is nothing to write home about, but under-10s love this place—uniformed waitresses deliver their meals in cardboard Cadillacs, they can select '50s tunes on the jukebox, and they get balloons just for stopping by. The menu includes all the typical diner options: blue-plate specials, chicken potpie, salads, humongous desserts, and all-day breakfast. Among other Mel's locations are those in the SoMa and Richmond neighborhoods.

2165 Lombard St. (at Steiner St.). ✆ **415/921-2867.** Sun–Wed 6am–1am; Thurs 6am–2am; Fri–Sat 24 hr. SoMa: 801 Mission St. (at 4th St.; 3 blocks south of Union Sq.). ✆ **415/227-0793.** Hours: same as Lombard

location. Richmond: 3355 Geary Blvd. (btw. Parker Ave. and Stanyan St.). ✆ **415/387-2255.** Sun–Thurs 6am–1am; Fri–Sat 6am–3am. www.melsdrive-in.com. Highchairs, boosters. Main courses $5–$15. MC, V. Muni: No. 30-Stockton bus to Steiner St., and then walk 1 block south on Steiner St.

Osha Thai Restaurant ★★ Finds THAI Serving the best Thai in San Francisco, Osha's first location was a funky, loud-music joint in the Tenderloin, with waitresses in pigtails and hip T-shirts serving up the best Thai food in town to post-partying crowds of 20-somethings. That meant we generally had to resort to getting takeout so we could order some great *pad see ew* for the kids (a tasty, wide-noodle version of *pad Thai*—with no peanuts, a plus for some kids) and luscious curries for us. While the original Tenderloin location is still around, and still open until 3am on weekends, Osha's tasty Thai cuisine was too good to be relegated to post-party munchers. Today there are five Osha locations around town, and the quality remains top-notch.

Our favorite is the Union Street location, which has an unused garden out back. That means our daughters can chase after their young brother once he's had his fill of fried tofu, noodles, and red rice—without fear of disturbing other diners. My husband and I can watch them through the window as we linger over dishes like spicy catfish or green peppercorn pork. In keeping with Osha's roots as a partier's destination, the sleek black and white decor is somewhat night-clubby—but we've always felt welcome and have seen other families there as well. Just arrive at an early-ish hour and ask for a table near the back window. (***Note:*** I've listed Osha as inexpensive, since two kids can share a pad see ew. But if you add in the crispy spring rolls, rice, and more interesting menu options for the adults, it can tip into moderate category—though it's worth it.)

2033 Union St. (at Buchanan St.). ✆ **415/567-6742.** www.oshathai.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses $8–$18. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11am–midnight. Muni: No. 41-Union or no. 45-Union-Stockton. Embarcadero: Embarcadero Center (at Clay and Drumm sts.). ✆ 415/788-6742. Daily 11am–11pm. Muni: Streetcars to Embarcadero Station. SoMa: 149 2nd St. (btw. Mission & Howard sts.) ✆ 415/278-9991. Mon–Sat 11am–11pm; Sun 4pm–11pm. Muni: 10-Townsend or 14-Mission bus. Mission: 819 Valencia St. (btw. 19th and 20th sts.) ✆ 415/826-7738. Daily 11am–midnight. Muni: 14-Mission or 49-Van Ness/Mission bus; BART to 24th St. Tenderloin: 696 Geary St. (at Leavenworth St.) ✆ 415/673-2368. Sun–Thurs 11am–1am; Fri–Sat 11am–3am. Muni: 2, 3, 4, 27, 38 buses.

Pasta Pomodoro ITALIAN Families, and the good fresh food, are responsible for making this locally owned chain so successful. The fare isn't going to have you phoning home in a rapture, but it's cheap, healthy, and you can make everyone happy here with a plate of lasagna for meat-eaters, a nice linguine primavera for the vegetarian, plain capellini for the refusnik, and some sautéed broccoli because you need your veggies. The best news is that Pasta Pomodoro also delivers. Should you be in a hotel without room service, don't stress about taking exhausted kids out once again: Those buttered noodles are just a phone call away. You can find other locations in the North Beach, Presidio Heights, Castro, and Sunset neighborhoods.

1875 Union St. (btw. Hyde and Larkin sts.). ✆ **415/771-7900.** North Beach: 655 Union St. (at Columbus Ave.). ✆ **415/399-0300.** Presidio Heights: 3611 California St. (at Spruce St.). ✆ **415/831-0900.** Castro: 2304 Market St. (at 16th St.). ✆ **415/558-8123.** Sunset: 816 Irving St. (at 9th Ave.). ✆ **415/566-0900.** www.pastapomodoro.com. Highchairs, boosters. Main courses $7.50–$15.25. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–10:30pm; Fri 11am–11:30pm; Sat noon–11:30pm; Sun noon–10:30pm. Muni: No. 41-Union or no. 45-Union-Stockton bus to Laguna St.

11 JAPANTOWN/PACIFIC HEIGHTS/ PRESIDIO HEIGHTS

MODERATE

Isobune JAPANESE/SUSHI If you want to introduce the kids to sushi, this could be a fun to place to start. The spicy tuna rolls, *maguro* tuna, and a few vegetarian options cruise by on little boats in front of diners. See something that looks enticing? Go ahead and take it. The chefs are constantly at work, refilling the little boats on their aquatic conveyer belt. You won't find the greatest selection here, but you're best off sticking to the mainstream stuff like California rolls anyway. ***Warning:*** This is one place that's actually better when it's crowded. If you come at odd hours, you'll see limp fish that's been around the loop a few too many times.

1737 Post St. (in the Japan Center). ✆ **415/563-1030.** Highchairs. Reservations not accepted. 2 pieces of sushi $2–$7, gratuity not included. AE, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–10pm. Muni: No. 38-Geary bus to the Japan Center at Webster St.

Juban Yakiniku House JAPANESE Although the grill-your-own concept may not have the dramatic appeal of a Benihana's, where the chef comes to your table and sautés while you watch, it's really more fun to take responsibility for your own dinner. At Juban, a gas grill embedded in the center of your table quickly cooks thin slices of tender beef, chicken, short ribs, shrimp, and other items while you and yours handle the cooking implements. The wait staff makes sure the temperature is just so, but in any event, it's pretty difficult to ruin your dinner. Smoke is relieved by special downdraft grills. Juban is big and modern, with wide tables to hold the various plates of raw and cooked food, and an accommodating staff. *Yakiniku,* or grilling, works well for children, who can pick and choose what they like and in reasonable quantities.

1581 Webster St. (in the Japan Center). ✆ **415/776-5822.** www.jubanrestaurant.com. Highchairs. Reservations recommended. Main courses $8–$13.50 lunch; $9–$50 dinner. AE, MC, V. Fri lunch 11:30am–2pm; Sat–Sun lunch 11:30am–4:30pm; Mon–Thurs dinner 5:30–9:30pm; Fri–Sun dinner 5–9:30pm. Muni: No. 38-Geary bus to the Japan Center at Webster St.

INEXPENSIVE

In addition to the options below, Pizzeria Delfina (p. 146), The Grove (p. 136), and Pasta Pomodoro (p. 137) have locations in this neighborhood.

Crepevine Finds AMERICAN/CREPES This is where we take the kids on a weekend day when we're on the way to or from the playground and we want a place where we can get a table, order quickly, and enjoy healthy, well-prepared food everyone will like. Although it's always packed on weekends, the ambitious host works hard to gets patrons seated quickly and, given the restaurant's large size, he usually does. While you wait for the table, peruse the massive menu board above the counter. The crepes that give the place its names are all good—the Californian with avocado, cheddar, and salsa is quite tasty and the kids love the simple ham and cheese combo—as are the omelets, salads, and sandwiches. The food will be served quickly, in hearty portions, and you'll soon be fortified for more sightseeing or, should the fashion-conscious members of your family prevail, for some boutique window shopping on Fillmore Street. Other locations are in Noe Valley and the Sunset.

Tips Sushi for the Whole Family

San Francisco kids have grown up with sushi, and it's not unusual to see sushi served at lunchtime in some of the city's middle and upper schools. Even very young children in the city are used to accompanying their parents on sushi outings. For a fun Japanese dining experience, arrive early when the restaurant is less busy and sit your family down at the sushi bar. Your kids will love watching the sushi chef expertly patting the rice into oblong shapes and placing raw fish on top, or making artistic rolls and slicing them ever so precisely with a very big knife. Finicky eaters may prefer leaving the *hamachi* (yellowtail) or spicy tuna rolls to their parents and sticking to cooked shrimp or vegetarian rolls. Many sushi restaurants also serve other Japanese dishes like tempura, teriyaki chicken, or *udon* noodles. Don't forget to order *edamame* (soybeans in the shell) to start. They're fun to eat and healthy.

2301 Fillmore St. (at Clay St.). ✆ **415/922-0102.** www.crepevine.com. Kids' menu, Highchairs, boosters. Reservations accepted for parties of 8 or more. Main courses approximately $12. Kids' menu items $4. V, MC, AE, DISC. Daily 8am–10pm. Muni: No. 22-Fillmore bus. Noe Valley: 216 Church St. (at Market St.) ✆ **415/**431-4646**.** Muni: Streetcar to Castro Station. Sunset: 624 Irving St. (at 7th Ave.) ✆ **415/**681-5858. Muni: N-Judah streetcar.

Ella's ★ AMERICAN/BREAKFAST This is one of the best places for brunch in San Francisco. Maybe that explains why the line at Ella's usually goes well out the door. The menu changes frequently, but expect fresh baked breads, exceptional pancakes, and omelets with appetizing fillings like sausage, mushroom, roasted red pepper, and Gruyère. To skip the weekend wait, come for a regular weekday breakfast. If you just can't come by in the morning, lunch (think cashew egg salad on cornmeal molasses bread) and dinner (curried lamb stew, perhaps) are also fine times to try Ella's neoclassical American cuisine.

500 Presidio Ave. (at California St.). ✆ **415/441-5669.** www.ellassanfrancisco.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations accepted for lunch only, not for brunch. Main courses $8.75–$12.25 brunch, $5.50–$16 lunch/dinner. MC, V. Mon–Fri 7am–3pm; Sat–Sun 8:30am–2pm. Muni: No. 1-California bus to Presidio Ave.

Tango Gelato ★ Finds ICE CREAM Like the U.S., Argentina has had its fair share of Italian immigrants and, as a result, has a delicious array of gelaterias. Fortunately for San Franciscans, one enterprising Argentine made his (very long) way up north and opened a gelateria in Pacific Heights. In addition to recognizable Italian flavors like *nocciolo* (hazelnut) and *amaretto,* you'll find luscious South American favorites like *dulce de leche,* an ultrasweet caramel concoction, and coconut. You'll also find other Argentine specialties, such as *alfajor* cookies.

2015 Fillmore St. (btw. California and Pine sts.). ✆ **415/346-3692.** No credit cards. Small cup $3; large cup $5.15. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–11pm. Muni: No. 1-California bus to Fillmore St., and then walk ½ block south.

2001 Thai Stick THAI The name of this place is so bad that I passed by it for years before a friend who lives in the neighborhood assured me that the food is actually quite good, and perfect for a casual family meal. He was right. My kids gobbled up their pad Thai and loved the spring rolls. My green curry with chicken was lightly spiced and had the smooth creaminess of coconut milk without being too rich. It was perfect. My husband loved the pork in peanut sauce. Even better was the price.

2001 Fillmore St. (at Pine St.). ✆ **415/885-6100.** Highchairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $5.95–$11. Sun–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11am–2am. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Muni: No. 1-California bus to California St., and then walk 1 block south.

12 RUSSIAN HILL

EXPENSIVE

Antica Trattoria ★★ Finds ITALIAN This neighborhood favorite is no ordinary Italian restaurant. Considered one of the best trattorie in San Francisco, its homemade pasta dishes are deliciously uncomplicated, accentuating high-quality, fresh ingredients over busy, heavy sauces. The menu also varies with the time of year. Although you can't go wrong with any of the pasta dishes, including such possibilities as fettuccine with porcini mushrooms, oven-dried olives, and brown-butter sage, if you consider a fish or meat dish for a change you will not be disappointed. Options such as Alaskan halibut and clams in white wine and tomatoes, or thinly sliced sirloin steak with arugula and roasted potatoes, are delectable. If you have room for dessert, the rich chocolate cake and airy tiramisu are transcendent. The crisp white walls, warm wood furniture, and unpretentious decor match the elegant food perfectly. Antica has no kids' menu, but the kitchen is happy to serve a kids' portion of hot buttered penne with veggies, and Vicki, the charming hostess, keeps a supply of crayons on hand. Whenever we eat at Antica, which is frequently, we wonder why we don't come even more often.

2400 Polk St. (at Union St.). ✆ **415/928-5797.** www.anticasf.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses $11.50–$21.50. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Thurs, Sun 5:30–9:30pm; Fri–Sat 5:30–10:30pm. Muni: No. 19-Polk to Union St., no. 41-Union, or no. 45-Union-Stockton bus to Polk St.

INEXPENSIVE

Boulange de Polk ★ BAKERY You used to have to get here early to claim one of the outdoor tables on a sunny day, but as of this writing the Boulange de Polk is temporarily closed while it expands into the space next door. My guess is the new, larger establishment will still be packed. Indeed, this always-busy French bakery, which proudly uses organic flour in its delectable creations, is so popular that every neighborhood seems to have a Boulange branch. Whichever location you visit, if it's the morning and you order a cappuccino and an almond croissant, or a chewy baguette with sweet butter and jam, you'll be transported to the Marais in Paris . . . at least until your kids' yelps yank you back to reality. Lunch items include smoked salmon quiche and *tartines* (savory tarts) served with salad. Kids will enjoy the chocolate croissants for breakfast or the ham and cheese baguette for lunch. (The original Boulange was at 2325 Pine St. Now you can find the bakeries at 1000 Cole St., 1909 Union St., 2043 Fillmore St., and 543 Columbus Ave. in North Beach.)

2300 Polk St. (at Green St.). ✆ **415/345-1107.** www.baybread.com. Lunch items $3.25–$10. MC, V, AE. Daily 7am–7pm. Muni: No. 19-Polk to Green St., no. 41-Union, or no. 45-Union-Stockton bus to Van Ness Ave. and Union St., and then walk 1 block south and 1 block east.

Swensen's Creamery ICE CREAM As is proudly advertised on its sign at the corner of Union and Hyde Streets, this is the original Swensen's creamery, established in 1948. You won't find the exotic flavors you get at Mitchell's Ice Cream, but they do offer three kinds of vanilla, which may be your little one's favorite flavor anyway. The location

Moments **Picnic with a View**

The Powell-Hyde cable car stops a half block from ZA Pizza. Grab some slices to go and re-board the cable car for the ride to Aquatic Park. Munching on tasty slices of crisp-crusted pizza with a view of both bridges sounds like a special moment to me.

along the Powell-Hyde cable car route is pretty convenient, too. Stop here for a scoop, perhaps after you've lunched at nearby ZA Pizza (see below), and before walking 2 blocks to crooked Lombard Street.

1999 Hyde St. (at Union St.). ✆ **415/775-6818.** Cones $2.45–$3.95. No credit cards. Sun, Tues–Thurs noon–10pm; Fri–Sat noon–11pm. Muni: Powell-Hyde cable car to Union St.

ZA Pizza ★ **Finds** PIZZA On a tree-lined section of Hyde Street along the cable car route, this is a favorite neighborhood gathering spot. Families can hang out at the counter of this tiny establishment and watch a game on TV or take a seat at one of the few indoor and outdoor tables. The thin-crust pizzas, named after luminary characters, include the Pesto Picasso, with roasted chicken, sun-dried tomatoes, and fresh pesto; and the Popeye the Greek, with spinach and feta cheese. We eat at ZA several times a year, but I know my family would prefer to go even more often. Two salads are also on the menu, but the house salad wins out over the plain-tasting Caesar.

1919 Hyde St. (btw. Green and Union sts.). ✆ **415/771-3100.** Highchairs. Slices $3.50–$4.50. AE, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Wed noon–10pm; Thurs–Sat noon–11pm. Muni: Powell-Hyde cable car to Green St.

13 THE HAIGHT

MODERATE

Indian Oven ★ INDIAN This is the best Indian food we've found in the city. It took us awhile, and a few meals where our girls ate little more than baked naan, puffy poori bread, and rice, to find some non-starch items on the menu that wouldn't be too spicy for them. The secret is to order creamy dishes like chicken *korma,* cooked in a mild yogurt sauce, and simply explaining to the waiter that you want no additional spice in it whatsoever. It usually works, and despite the absence of chili peppers, the dish is still so delicious that even we adults enjoy it. Other delectable dishes for grown-ups include the *saag goshт,* lamb with creamed spinach, and the wonderful meats baked in the tandoori oven. As it's located in the Haight, Indian Oven is a low-key spot, but it's refined enough to include white tablecloths and very attentive staff who will kindly help newcomers to Indian cooking navigate the menu. Located on a corner, Indian Oven has two full walls of windows, making it a light-filled, welcoming space. We like to show up early, before it starts to fill up, and we've always seen another family or two introducing their own kids to this varied and wonderful cuisine.

233 Fillmore Haight St. (at Waller St., 1/2 block south of Haight St.). ✆ **415/626-1628.** www.indianovensf.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses $8–$16. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 5–11pm. Muni: No. 6-Parnassus, no. 7-Haight, or no. 71-Haight-Noreiga bus to Fillmore St.

Ben & Jerry's ICE CREAM I can't think of a more appropriate place to indulge in this politically correct frozen delight. Ben & Jerry's is all about social responsibility, which is clear enough from the unbleached recycled paper napkins and the pictures of hormone-free cows grazing happily in Vermont. But it's also about a counter-culture that once had its epicenter right in the neighborhood. How great is it to enjoy a scoop of Cherry Garcia just around the corner from where Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead lived during the ['67 Summer of Love? And, with all those pure ingredients, it's delicious as well.

1480 Haight St. (btw. Masonic Ave. and Ashbury St.). ✆ **415/626-4143.** www.benjerry.com. Cones from $4.50. AE, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 10:30am–9pm; Fri–Sat 10:30am–10pm. Muni: No. 6-Parnassus, no. 7-Haight, or no. 71-Haight-Noreiga bus to Ashbury St.

Blue Front Cafe AMERICAN/BREAKFAST/MEDITERRANEAN The Blue Front's menu is as eclectic as the upbringing of its friendly owners, three Greek Orthodox Christian brothers who were raised in the Old City of Jerusalem. The specialties are Middle Eastern/Mediterranean—spit-roasted lamb gyros in pita bread and falafel wraps are among the choices—but you'll find all-American turkey, club, and Reuben sandwiches on the menu as well. The Blue Front is also a good breakfast spot, serving up three-egg omelets, toasted bagels, and breakfast wraps in Mediterranean *lavash* bread. The room is nothing fancy—wooden tables are close together with plenty of people reading their papers and nursing their coffees—but the huge Genie hanging out front blends in well with the colorful neighborhood.

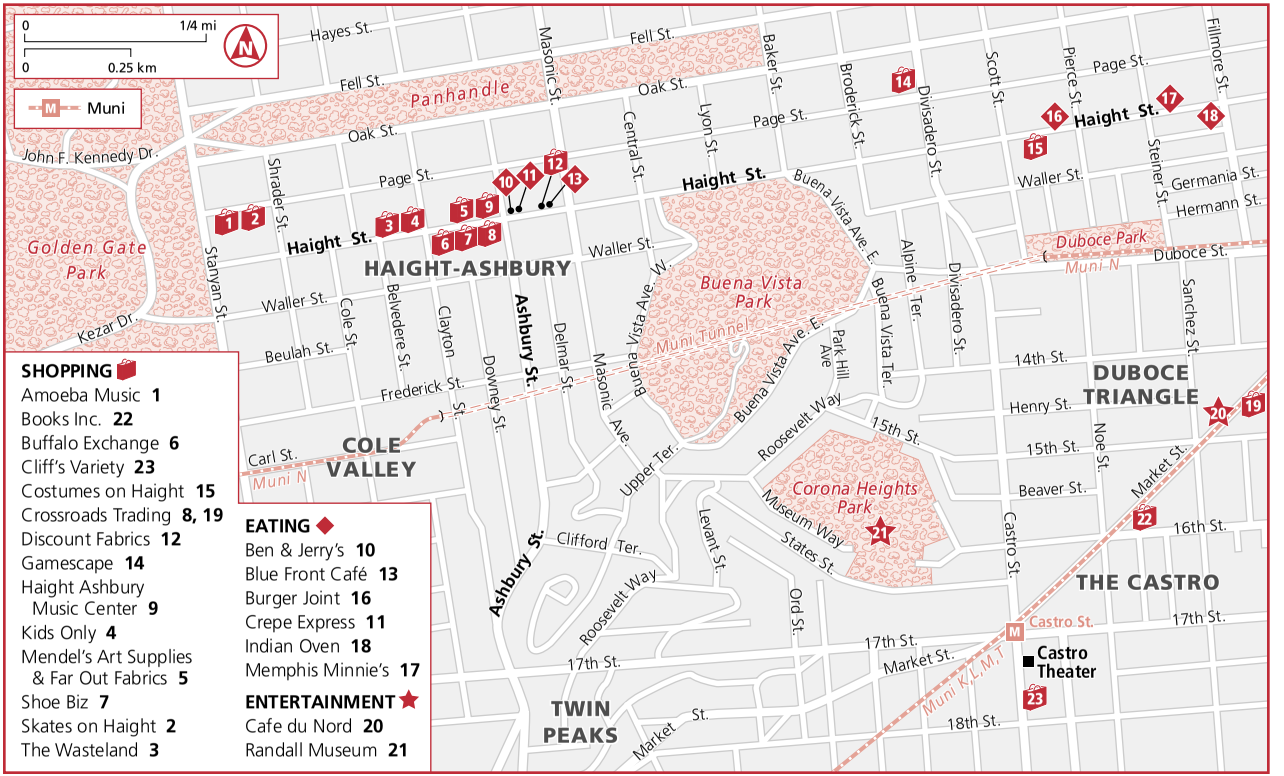
1430 Haight St. (btw. Masonic Ave. and Ashbury St.). ✆ **415/252-5917.** www.bluefrontcafe.com. Highchairs. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $5.25–$9.75. MC, V. Sun–Thurs 7:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 7:30am–11pm. Muni: No. 6-Parnassus, no. 7-Haight, or no. 71-Haight-Noreiga bus to Masonic Ave.

Burger Joint ★ HAMBURGERS In a setting reminiscent of a '50s-era TV sitcom, with vinyl-covered chairs and vintage Formica patterns on the tables, you can enjoy a really good burger. They're made with naturally raised, hormone-free Niman Ranch beef and served on a bun that has enough personality to handle a juicy hand-formed patty. The only alternatives to a hamburger or cheeseburger are a hot dog, free-range chicken breast sandwich, or veggie burger, all served with crispy fries. Yummy milkshakes and root beer floats are made with San Francisco's Double Rainbow ice cream. Another location is in the Mission neighborhood.

700 Haight St. (at Pierce St.). ✆ **415/864-3833.** Daily 11am–10pm. V, M. www.burgerjointsf.com. Boosters, highchairs. Main courses $7–$8.50. Muni: No. 6-Parnassus, no. 7-Haight, or no. 71-Haight-Noreiga bus to Pierce St. Mission: 807 Valencia St. (btw. 19th and 20th sts.). ✆ **415/824-3494.** Daily 11am–11pm. Cash only. Muni: Bart to 16th or 24th sts. South Beach: 242 King St. (btw. 3rd and 4th sts. across from AT&T ballpark.) ✆ **415/371-1611.** 11am–9pm. V, MC, AE. Muni: N-Judah or T-Ingleside streetcar to 2nd St. and King Station.

Crepe Express CREPES For an afternoon snack, you can't do better by the kidlets than a thin crepe filled with Nutella and bananas and topped with whipped cream. That's living. This very casual cafe also serves savory crepes, baguette sandwiches, and salads. The food is good, but the crepes are the reason to stop here.

1476 Haight St. (at Ashbury St.). ✆ **415/865-0264.** Main courses less than $10. MC, V. Sun–Thurs 9:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 9:30am–11pm. Muni: No. 6-Parnassus, no. 7-Haight, or no. 71-Haight-Noreiga bus to Ashbury St.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16th St.
Castro St.
John F. Kennedy Dr.
Golden Gate Park
Kezar Dr.
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Ashbury St.
Delmar St.
Downey St.
Masonic Ave
Buena Vista Ave. W.
Buena Vista Ave. E.
Muni Tunnel
Buena Vista Park
Park Hill Ave
Buena Vista Ter.
Alpine Ter.
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Upper Ter.
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Fell St.
Masonic St.
HAIGHT-ASHBURY
COLE VALLEY
DUBOCE TRIANGLE
THE CASTRO
TWIN PEAKS
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Memphis Minnie's BARBECUE If you've got a hankering for a tender piece of slow-cooked meat, head straight to Memphis Minnie's. The owner smokes his brisket for 12 hours and adds his own spice rub for kick and flavor. Other options are finger-licking-good ribs and succulent pulled pork. The protocol is simple: stand in line and choose your meat and two sides, such as sweet potato or corn muffin, and have a seat at one of the tables lined up against the bright yellow and red wall. Look around at the playful decor, which includes plastic pigs, black-and-white cow-print ceiling fans, pinned up trucker hats, and pithy sayings like "Never Trust a Skinny Cook." You can also read the favorable newspaper clippings about Minnie's under glass at each table. Once your meal is ready, choose from one of the three sauces at your table: red Texan, North Carolina vinegar, and South Carolina yellow mustard. Fortunately, each table has a full roll of paper towels on it as well. All the meat is delicious, and most of the sides, with the exception of the overly dry corn muffins, are tasty, too.

576 Haight St. (at Steiner St.). ✆ **415/864-7675.** www.memphisminnies.com. Highchairs, boosters. Main courses $8–$20. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 11am–10pm; Sun 11am–9pm. Muni: No. 6-Parnassus, no. 7-Haight, or no. 71-Haight-Noriega bus to Steiner St.

14 THE MISSION

If you're headed to or from any of these restaurants at night and you're not driving, I'd recommend taking a cab.

EXPENSIVE

Delfina ★★★ ITALIAN This renowned Tuscan-Italian restaurant defines what's incredible about the city's neighborhood eats. Every day chef/co-owner Craig Stoll, one of *Food & Wine*'s Best New Chefs a few years back, whips up a new menu of delectable, ultra-fresh fare. Diners trek in from all over the city for it, even though there's absolutely nowhere to park. (Take a cab.) The Niman Ranch flat-iron steak with french fries is a standard, but a more seasonal option might be winter gnocchi with squash and chestnuts or lamb with polenta and sweet peas. Don't fail to order the buttermilk *panna cotta* for dessert. The yellow walls, close-together tables, and hip young clientele give this place an adult energy, so I suggest it for a night when you have a babysitter. An added plus is its proximity to many hopping Mission bars: If you do have a sitter, you can enjoy an hour or two out on the town after dinner.

That said, if you absolutely want to visit and have the kids in tow, not to worry. The staff is friendly and relaxed. Moreover, chef Stoll and his wife Annie are parents themselves and sure to be accommodating. But if you're in any way concerned that the place may be too much for your kids, just head next door to Pizzeria Delfina (see below). ***Note:*** While I've listed Delfina in the expensive category, the reasonable prices almost justify listing it in the moderate category.

3621 18th St. (btw. Dolores and Guerrero sts.). ✆ **415/552-4055.** www.delfinasf.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $18–$26. MC, V. Mon–Thurs 5:30–10pm; Fri–Sat 5:30–11pm; Sun 5–10pm. Muni: J-Church streetcar to 18th St., and then walk 2 blocks east.

Foreign Cinema ★★ Finds CALIFORNIA/MEDITERRANEAN What sets this establishment apart from any other place in the city is its outdoor courtyard with a large exposed-cement wall onto which are projected foreign films, many of them Oscar winners. Heat lamps keep the place cozy, and, well, it's just an incredibly fun way to have a

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- Sports Basement **1**

meal. The overall tone of the place is quite grown-up, with an adjoining, very hip bar next door. Fortunately, the chefs have a young boy of their own, who can be seen running around the courtyard in the early part of the evening. They've even added a kids' menu, so arrive early and bring the children. Or try the weekend brunch, which is the family-friendliest meal here.

The best part of the whole experience is that the food is very good—even though this place is so cool it doesn't need to be. Chefs/parents Gayle Pirie and John Clark are both veterans of two of the best kitchens in the Bay Area, Zuni Cafe and Berkeley's Chez Panisse. In addition to 20 different choices from the oyster bar, their seasonally changing menu may include such appetizers ("premieres") as beef carpaccio with fried herbs, Manchego cheese, and horseradish sauce. Main courses ("features") could include seared sea scallops with heirloom tomatoes, bacon aioli, and basil sauce. Their naturally raised beef hails from Montana and most of the produce is local and organic.

2534 Mission St. (btw. 21st and 22nd sts.). ✆ **415/648-7600.** www.foreigncinema.com. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses $16–$30; brunch $8.50–$18; kids' menu $7. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 6–10pm; Fri–Sat 6–11pm; Sun 5–10pm (9pm during winter); Sat brunch 11am–6pm; Sun brunch 11am–5pm. Muni: BART to 24th St., and then walk 2 blocks north.

MODERATE

In addition to the option below, you can find Café Gratitude (p. 150) in this neighborhood.

Pizzeria Delfina ★★ Finds PIZZA You're in luck. The fact is you really want some excellent Italian food and you may even remember hearing about an amazing Tuscan restaurant in the Mission district called Delfina (see above). The trouble is your kids are tired (or loud), and you're afraid they just won't mix with a crowd of hip diners sipping wine and talking politics over dishes like local quail with polenta. Well, now you can have your cake and eat it too. Actually, make that pizza. Delfina's owners Craig and Anne Stoll have now opened an irresistible pizzeria next door to their original, and ever-popular, restaurant. At Pizzeria Delfina, your kids may not appreciate just how fresh the tomatoes and creamy the mozzarella are on their ultra-thin crust margherita pizza, but if it's a cheese pizza, they're also not likely to complain. You, meanwhile, are sure to savor the "Broccoli Raab," with rich ricotta and tangy oven-dried tomatoes, or the "Salsiccia" with homemade fennel sausage. The salads and antipasti are also impressive and, for dessert, the Bellwether ricotta cannoli is dreamy. The other great thing about Pizzeria Delfina is that, unlike at its fancy predecessor, you don't have to call weeks ahead to get a reservation . . . but you do need to show up early. Arrive before 7pm or you'll be waiting at least an hour.

3611 18th St. (btw. Dolores and Guerrero sts.). ✆ **415/437-6800.** Highchairs, boosters. www.pizzeriadelfina.com. Reservations not accepted. Pizzas $10–$17. MC, V. Mon 5:30–10pm; Tues–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri 11:30am–11pm; Sat noon–11pm; Sun noon–10pm. Muni: J-Church streetcar to 18th St., and then walk 2 blocks east. Pacific Heights location: 2406 California St. (at Fillmore St.). ✆ **415/440-1189.** Sun–Thurs 11:30am–10pm, Fri 11:30am–11pm.

INEXPENSIVE

In addition to the options below, you can find Osha Thai (p. 137), Burger Joint (p. 142), and Frjtz (p. 133) in this neighborhood.

Dolores Park Cafe ★ Finds AMERICAN/BREAKFAST The setting alone, across the street from Dolores Park with a spacious front deck, would probably be enough to guarantee this cafe's popularity. But it also happens to serve a terrific cafe latte, and plenty

of other tasty items, like albacore tuna melts on whole grain bread and Niman Ranch honey glazed ham sandwiches. Breakfast items, soups, and salads are all worth stopping by for as well. Enjoy your meal in the sunshine, alongside other diners rocking strollers or perusing the newspaper. An all-ages music show Friday nights from 7:30 to 9:30pm is a big hit with kids, but it's also packed, so make sure to eat your dinner before the crowds stream in.

501 Dolores St. (at 18th St.). ✆ **415/621-2936.** www.doloresparkcafe.org. Highchairs. Reservations not accepted. Sandwiches/salads $6–$8.25. M, V. Daily 7am–8pm. Fri music nights until 9:30pm. Muni: J-Church streetcar to 18th St., and then walk 1 block east.

La Corneta Taqueria ★ MEXICAN Taquerias abound in the Mission, so it may be useful to clarify what they actually sell, especially if you are not from the Southwest. They do not sell the crunchy, uniformly shaped "tacos" that break into a million pieces when you bite them, such as you find at the fast food chains Del Taco or Taco Bell. Mission taquerias sell flavorful tacos on soft corn or flour tortillas, in addition to tostadas, enchiladas, and even plated dinners. But the biggest reason most San Franciscans come to a taqueria is for the burritos. And at La Corneta, in addition to a more colorful, spacious, and clean-feeling dining room than you find at many neighborhood taquerias, you'll get a darn good burrito. Stand in line to choose beans (black, pinto, refried), a filling (beef, beef tongue, chicken, pork, shrimp, vegetarian), and your salsa preference (mild or hot). Make sure to ask for guacamole and sour cream as well. After that, you won't need to eat until tomorrow.

2731 Mission St. (btw. 23rd and 24th sts.). ✆ **415/643-7001.** Highchairs. Main courses $4–$13. MC, V. Daily 10am–10pm. BART to 24th and Mission sts.

Mitchell's Ice Cream ★ Finds ICE CREAM Getting to Mitchell's is going to require commitment on the part of anyone without a car because it's located in the outer Mission a few blocks from the nearest streetcar line. For true ice cream lovers, however, it's a schlep worth your time. Beyond the ice cream's incredible creaminess, Mitchell's is best loved for its lengthy menu featuring seasonal fresh fruit and such unusual ice cream flavors as *maíz/queso* (corn/cheese) and lychee fruit. I love the avocado, but *buko* (baby coconut) is hands-down the most popular flavor, with the cinnamony Mexican chocolate coming in second. Even plain old vanilla is delicious. Be sure to elbow your way inside this small store if you arrive after dinner or in the afternoon and take a number from the dispenser by the door. If you just can't make it out this way, a more limited selection of Mitchell's flavors can be found at the **Santa Barbara Ice Creamery** on 2240 Chestnut St. in the Marina (✆ **415/922-6417**) and at **Norman's Ice Cream & Freezes** (p. 131).

688 San Jose Ave. (at 29th St.). ✆ **415/648-2300.** www.mitchellsicecream.com. 1 scoop $2.65; 2 scoops $4.50. Credit cards only accepted on orders more than $9. AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–11pm. Muni: J-Church streetcar to 28th St., and then walk east to Guerrero St. and turn right; Guerrero St. will become San Jose Ave.

Pancho Villa Taqueria MEXICAN This is an old standby and one of the best *taquerias* in the city. The ever-present line testifies to the quality and consistency of the burritos, tacos, quesadillas, and enormous combination plates of prawns, *carne asada,* and chicken. The dining room isn't much to look at—utilitarian comes to mind—but who cares? With a choice of meats, beans, tortillas, salsas, and extras like sour cream or avocado, your eyes will be on your plate. Portions are substantial, and a late lunch will easily serve for dinner. Baby burritos are available for smaller appetites.

3071 16th St. (btw. Mission and Valencia sts.). ✆ **415/864-8840.** www.panchovillasf.com. Highchairs, boosters. Main courses $1.35–$16. AE, MC, V. Daily 10am–midnight. Muni: BART to 16th and Mission sts., and then walk 1 block west.

Tartine ★ Finds BAKERY Crowds from far and near are drawn by the smell of freshly baked bread at Tartine, considered by many to be the best bakery in San Francisco. You could be forgiven for forgoing dinner and simply dining on a loaf of oven-fresh walnut bread, which comes out of the oven after 4pm and sells out quickly. If the walnut bread is gone, all is not lost: Tartine also has some wonderful toasted sandwiches and plenty of other mouthwatering baked goods to choose from.

600 Guerrero St. (at 18th St.). ✆ **415/487-2600.** www.tartinebakery.com. No reservations. Sandwiches $8.25–$9.75. AE, MC, V. Mon 8am–7pm; Tues–Wed 7:30am–7pm; Thurs–Fri 7:30am–8pm; Sat 8am–8pm; Sun 9am–8pm. Muni: BART to 16th St., and then walk west to Guerrero St. and 2 blocks south.

Ti Couz ★ Finds CREPES This stylish standout started as a tiny creperie featuring Norman buckwheat crepes, which come served in folded squares. Combinations of fillings are suggested, but diners are also free to choose from such options as sausage, smoked salmon, mushrooms, or goat cheese. For dessert, fillings include fruit, chocolate, and ice cream. The soups and salads are also top-notch. The place got so popular that it soon expanded to include the neighboring storefront. On sunny days, put your name down and wait for an outside table.

3108 16th St. (btw. Guerrero and Valencia sts.). ✆ **415/252-7373.** Highchairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Crepes $2–$8. MC, V. Fri–Mon 11am–11pm; Tues–Thurs 5–11pm. Muni: BART to 16th and Mission sts., and then walk 1½ blocks west.

15 THE CASTRO & NOE VALLEY

MODERATE

Lovejoy's Tea Room AFTERNOON TEA Crowded with settees, chairs, lace-covered tables, and bakefronts holding teapots and china cups, Lovejoy's has successfully brought a bit of old England across the pond. Tea here is much less formal than hotel teas, and cheaper, so plenty of moms and children celebrate quality time over a cuppa without waiting for a special occasion. Crustless tea sandwiches come with cream cheese and apple, roast beef with horseradish, Stilton cheese with pear, and other very British combinations. Raisin scones are served with clotted cream and jam, and there's always a selection of sweets. The tea selection is bountiful, but children have the option of drinking cocoa, and jelly sandwiches are served with the Wee Tea. If you like the chair you're sitting on or the teacup from which you're sipping, go ahead and buy it. Lovejoy's doubles as an antiques store, and everything is for sale.

1351 Church St. (at Clipper St.). ✆ **415/648-5895.** www.lovejoystearoom.com. Reservations recommended. Light tea $14; high tea $17; Queen's Tea $22; Wee Tea $13. MC, V. Wed–Sun 11am–6pm (kitchen closes at 5:30pm). Muni: J-Church streetcar to 26th St. to Clipper St.

INEXPENSIVE

In addition to the option below, you can find a Pasta Pomodoro in this neighborhood (p. 137).

Chow AMERICAN The raw ingredients in the kitchen include organic and local produce and naturally raised meats. The end product on your table is flavorful, appealing comfort food. From chicken potpie to spaghetti and meatballs, the food here resembles something grandma might cook up . . . if she lived on an organic farm and had a high-tech kitchen. If you're in the mood for something a bit more exciting, wood-fired pizzas, delicious grilled meats, and a more inventive ethnic-inspired entree or two are also on

offer. With wooden floors and wainscoting, dark green walls, and close-together tables, the overall ambience is comfortable—albeit crowded. With desserts like ginger cake with pumpkin ice cream and caramel sauce, and down-home prices to boot, it's easy to see how this place stays so popular.

215 Church St. (at Market St.). ✆ **415/552-2469.** www.chowfoodbar.com. Kid's Menu, Highchairs, boosters. Main courses $4–$9 breakfast (weekdays only); $4.50–$11 brunch (weekends only); $7–$14 dinner. DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 8am–11pm; Fri–Sat 8am–midnight. Muni: F-Market or J-Church streetcar to Church St. Station, and then walk 1/2 block south on Church St.

16 THE RICHMOND & SUNSET

EXPENSIVE

Cliff House Bistro AMERICAN Come here for the view and the history. The Cliff House building sits on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, with views to the north, west, and south. Moreover, it boasts a rich history. Three U.S. presidents visited the first 1863 Cliff House before it was destroyed by fire. In 1886 local millionaire Adolph Sutro built the second Cliff House, but 11 years later it, too, burned down. In 1909 Sutro's daughter built the third Cliff House, which was eventually acquired by the National Park Service.

In late 2004, the Cliff House reopened following a $19 million renovation. A stylish modern wing features an expensive restaurant, Sutro's, whereas the more traditionally styled side of the building houses the more casual Cliff House Bistro. Both restaurants boast breathtaking views. The Bistro's decor, with old-fashioned tile flooring and more than 200 photographs of bygone movie stars, is charming. The menu is the least impressive part of the experience. In my book $27 is a lot for a crab Louie, especially when it's too salty. But in fact the view is so priceless, it may well be worth it. Just be sure to come during daylight hours and stick to simple dishes like fish and chips, which are pretty good and, at $16, tolerably expensive. A smarter option may be to order a scramble, French toast, or even a salad off the breakfast menu, which is less pricey and available daily until 3:15pm.

1090 Point Lobos Ave. (Geary Blvd. turns into Point Lobos Ave. west of 48th Ave.). ✆ **415/386-3330.** www.cliffhouse.com. Highchairs. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $8–$17 breakfast; $13–$27 lunch; $13–$28 dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 9am–9:30pm; Fri–Sat 9am–10pm. Muni: No. 38-Geary bus to 48th Ave., and then walk 1 block or transfer to no. 18–46th Ave. bus.

MODERATE

Aziza ★★ MOROCCAN Attention to detail is the watchword at this North African oasis nestled in the city's most multicultural neighborhood. The arched ceilings, Moroccan lamps, hand-painted Arabesque plateware, and traditional Moroccan dishes will transport you to a distant continent. The food is lovingly prepared using local, organic ingredients. The *bastilla,* saffron-braised chicken and almonds baked in phyllo dough and dusted with powdered sugar and cinnamon, is out of this world. It takes 25 minutes to prepare, though, which may be too much of a wait for tired, hungry kids. Everyone will be pleased with the classic "couscous Aziza": vegetables, grilled chicken, prawns, and spicy lamb sausage on a bed of steamed couscous. Grown-ups may opt for the Moroccan spiced prawn *tagine,* and kids will enjoy the chicken brochettes—made with naturally raised poultry, of course. The lighting is muted and the mood gets more adult as the evening wears on, so plan on arriving early if you have younger kids. That said, families

dining on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday nights always stay past 7pm, when the belly dancer arrives.

5800 Geary Blvd. (at 22nd Ave.). ✆ **415/752-2222.** www.aziza-sf.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses $17–$26. MC, V. Wed–Mon 5:30–10:30pm. Muni: No. 38-Geary bus to 22nd Ave.

Café Gratitude VEGAN Those eschewing meat in the family and the merely curious may enjoy trying out Café Gratitude. Here, it's about more than all-vegan, mostly raw, food. It's about an entire life attitude. The unusual philosophy here is called "Being Abundance" and it's presented none-too-subtly. Tables feature the "Abounding River" board game, and you don't just order a plain salad. It's the "I am Dazzling" Caesar salad, the "I am Prosperous" tropical salad, and the like. Pizzas are made using buckwheat sunflower-seed sourdough flatbread topped with Brazil nut Parmesan; fruit juices come with names like "I am Succulent;" and the overly relaxed service might make you start glancing at your watch. But you can play the board game while you wait and sip on the tasty, if pricey, "I am Effervescent" ginger ale. The Thai coconut soup—ahem, I mean the "I am Thankful" Thai coconut soup—is a good choice, as is the "I am Accepting" sushi bowl with kale, cukes, and avocado. Teens interested in alternative cuisines might be impressed with lunch at Café Gratitude, but be prepared to pay for their appreciation, since a large fruit juice costs $8 and the entrees are all $15.

1336 9th Ave. (at Irving St.). ✆ **415/683-1346.** www.cafegratitude.com. Highchairs. MC, V. Daily 10am–10pm. Muni: N-Judah streetcar to 9th Ave., then walk north. Mission: 2400 Harrison St. (at 20th St.) ✆ **415/830-3014.** Daily 9am–10pm. Muni: 12-Folsom/Pacific or 27-Bryant bus, or BART to 16th St.

Park Chalet ★ AMERICAN Opened in April 2004, the Park Chalet has the best outdoor dining area in the city. Located on the ground floor behind the Golden Gate Park Visitor's Center, it opens onto a lovely garden framed by the park's tall trees. With a glass ceiling, retractable glass walls, a stone fireplace, and upscale furnishings, it feels like a European countryside restaurant. The menu is essentially American, though, featuring classic salads, sandwiches, and meat dishes like barbecue pork ribs or shepherd's pie. The most inventive options are the individual pizzas, such as one with wild mushrooms, roasted garlic, goat cheese, truffle oil, and thyme. On weekends, you may even find a "brunch pizza," topped with artichoke, pancetta, mushrooms, and poached egg. If the Dungeness crab Benedict is on offer, you're in luck. Kids get their own menus and crayons. Once your little ones have polished off their cheese pizzas or corndogs, let them run around on the well-tended lawn while you finish your meals in peace. There'll be lots of other kids out there as well.

1000 Great Hwy. (btw. Fulton St. and Lincoln Way). ✆ **415/386-8439.** www.beachchalet.com. Kids' menu, highchairs, boosters. Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses $10–$17 lunch, $10–$24 dinner; kids' menu $5.25. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–9pm; Fri–Sat 11am–11pm; Sun 10am–9pm. Muni: No. 5-Fulton, no. 31-Balboa, or no. 38-Geary buses, or N-Judah streetcar and transfer to no. 18–46th Ave. bus.

Pizzetta 211 ★ Finds PIZZA When you arrive at this miniscule storefront on an otherwise residential street far from downtown, you'll feel like you've come upon a hidden gem. You have. The cozy pizzeria, with but a handful of indoor and outdoor tables, serves up thin-crust, wood-oven-fired *pizzette* from a weekly changing menu. Whenever possible, organic produce, dairy, and grains are used to make delectable, crispy pizzas with inspired toppings like oven-dried San Marzano tomatoes, prosciutto, and local goat cheese, or roasted cauliflower, garlic, and bread crumbs. Salads and Italian desserts are also available. This is gourmet stuff, and the staff takes itself seriously, so at dinner time

remind the kids that normal pizzeria behavior does not apply—especially if you're seated indoors. A better option is to come for lunch after a morning hike at Land's End and sit outside.

211 23rd Ave. (at California St.). ✆ **415/379-9880.** Reservations not accepted. Individual pizzas $9–$14. No credit cards. Mon 5–9pm; Wed–Fri lunch noon–2:30pm, dinner 5–9pm; Sat–Sun noon–9pm. Muni: No 1-California bus to 23rd Ave.

INEXPENSIVE

In addition to the options below, both Mel's Drive-in (p. 136) and Pasta Pomodoro (p. 137) have locations in this neighborhood.

Burma Superstar ★ Finds BURMESE Here's a reason to trek out to the Richmond District. Amid the Korean, Turkish, Indian, Chinese, Russian, Mexican, and many other ethnic restaurants crammed into a few short blocks this little Burmese gem is my absolute favorite. The tea leaf salad is all the rage among those lucky enough to know about this small and nearly always packed establishment, but what really makes my kids', and my, mouths water are dishes like the *nan gyi dok*, Burmese rice noodles and chicken in a creamy coconut curry sauce with just a hint of spice. Adults may like the chili-tossed shrimp or sesame beef, and even the finickiest eater will go gaga over the slightly sweet coconut rice and the incredibly rich *platha,* pan-fried layered bread. Burma Superstar is hugely popular at lunchtime, so if you can't get a table, consider ordering takeout and heading out to the Presidio for a picnic. (Walk north on 5th Ave. for 3 blocks or drive into the Presidio on Arguello St., which is 4 blocks east of 4th Ave.).

309 Clement St. (at 4th Ave.). ✆ **415/387-2147.** www.burmasuperstar.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $8–$16. MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11am–3:30pm and 5–9:30pm; Fri-Sat 11am–3:30pm and 5–10pm. Muni: No. 2-Clement or no. 38-Geary to 5th Ave., and then walk 1 block north to Clement St.

de Young Cafe ★ Finds CALIFORNIA This is our favorite lunch spot in Golden Gate Park. Beyond inventively prepared soups, salads, and sandwiches—such as a Thai beef sandwich with ginger roast beef, lemon grass, and sweet soy sauce—you can also enjoy tasty grilled options like fish tacos with cilantro-lime slaw and hot items such as pasta puttanesca or Dungeness crab cakes. The food is made with seasonal, local ingredients, most of which is produced, raised, or farmed within 150 miles of the cafe. The kids might enjoy the PB&J, pointedly made with organic peanut butter, or the Niman Ranch hot dogs. Although the offerings are appetizing, the cafe's best asset is its location within the de Young Museum, where it's open to all visitors. On sunny days, you can sit outside by the sculpture garden. A sesame chicken salad is always nice, but a sesame chicken salad next to a Henry Moore sculpture is terrific.

1200 9th Ave. (at Lincoln Way). ✆ **415/750-2614.** Highchairs. Salads/sandwiches $5.50–$14. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 9:30am–4:30pm. Muni: N-Judah streetcar to 9th Ave., and then walk north on 9th Ave. into the park or no. 44-O'Shaughnessy bus to Concourse Dr.

Giorgio's Pizzeria PIZZERIA Many San Francisco parents consider Giorgio's the most kid-friendly restaurant in town. If you like old-fashioned thin-crust pizza with traditional toppings like pepperoni or mushrooms and sausage, served up in surroundings that might resemble a pizzeria from your own childhood (think red vinyl booth seats and red-and-white-checkered oilcloth tablecloths), then this is the place for you. Every Wednesday from 4 to 6pm is "Kids' Happy Hour": Kids can order any mini pizza and make it themselves for $12. Giorgio's also has deals for lunchtime children's parties, and there always seems to be one taking place. You'll find a few pastas on the menu, too.

151 Clement St. (at 3rd Ave.). ✆ **415/668-1266.** www.giorgiospizza.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Minipizza $12; large pizza $14.50–$26. MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11am–11pm. Muni: No. 2-Clement, no. 3-Jackson, or no. 4-Sutter bus to 3rd Ave.; or no. 1-California bus to 3rd Ave., and then walk 1 block south to Clement St.

Park Chow AMERICAN Just like Chow, its sister restaurant in the Castro, Park Chow balances good ingredients, a lively atmosphere, and good value to deliver a truly happy meal. Please see the Chow review on p. 148.

1240 9th Ave. (btw. Irving St. and Lincoln Way). ✆ **415/665-9912.** www.chowfoodbar.com. Highchairs, boosters. Reservations not necessary. Main courses $6–$16.50. MC, V. Sun–Thurs 8am–10pm; Fri 8am–11pm. Muni: N-Judah streetcar to 9th Ave., and then walk 2 blocks north toward the park.

Ton Kiang ★ Finds CHINESE/DIM SUM Perhaps the most popular place for dim sum in San Francisco, Ton Kiang starts getting crowded about half an hour after the doors open on weekend mornings. So come during the week, arrive early, or, better yet, try to round up enough people—eight or more—to make a reservation. We're always calling up friends at the last minute to join us because dim sum at Ton Kiang is best enjoyed with lots of people at a large, round table. Servers come by with freshly made batches of shrimp dumplings, pork buns, crisp-steamed vegetables, and other tiny treats, which they place on a big lazy Susan in the middle of the table. Save room for dessert—the walnut cookies, custard pancakes, and mango pudding are all divine. Something about the communal dining experience makes my kids more adventurous than usual, and there really isn't an item our normally choosy eaters don't like. That may explain why the upstairs dining room, where you'll probably end up, is always packed with families. If you can think of any reason to head out this way—perhaps you're off to the Legion of Honor or plan to walk on Ocean Beach—do so. ***Tip:*** They don't have booster seats, so try stacking one chair on top of another.

5821 Geary Blvd. (btw. 22nd and 23rd aves.). ✆ **415/387-8273.** www.tonkiang.net. Highchairs. Reservations only for parties of 8 or more. Main courses $10–$26; dim sum $2.50–$5.50. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 10am–9pm; Fri 10am–9:30pm; Sat 9:30am–9:30pm; Sun 9am–9pm. Muni: No. 38-Geary bus to 22nd Ave.

Troya TURKISH As I mentioned at the start of the chapter, I'm always on the lookout for dining options where parents can try new foods that kids will also enjoy. And anytime you serve something on a stick, provided it's not overly spicy, kids are bound to like it. So it is with Troya, a casual Turkish eatery in the heart of the Richmond District's ethnic food zone. I wouldn't head to the Richmond expressly for this restaurant (as I would for Burma Superstar), but if you happen to be in this neck of the woods and want to expand your kids' culinary horizons, sit yourselves at Troya and order them the mixed kabob platter or the lamb chops on couscous. Adults can opt for more creative dishes. Typical starters include stuffed grape leaves, calamari stuffed with spinach and goat cheese, or grilled sardines on watercress. The dining room is not large, but the tile floors, big glass windows, and basic wooden tables give it a simple, airy feel that will make families feel welcome.

349 Clement St. (at 5th Ave.). ✆ **415/379-6000.** www.troyasf.com. Highchairs. Main courses $13.50–$16. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 5pm–9:30pm; Fri–Sat noon–10pm; Sun noon–9:30pm. Muni: No. 2-Clement or no. 38-Geary to 5th Ave., and then walk 1 block north to Clement St.

6

Exploring San Francisco with Your Kids

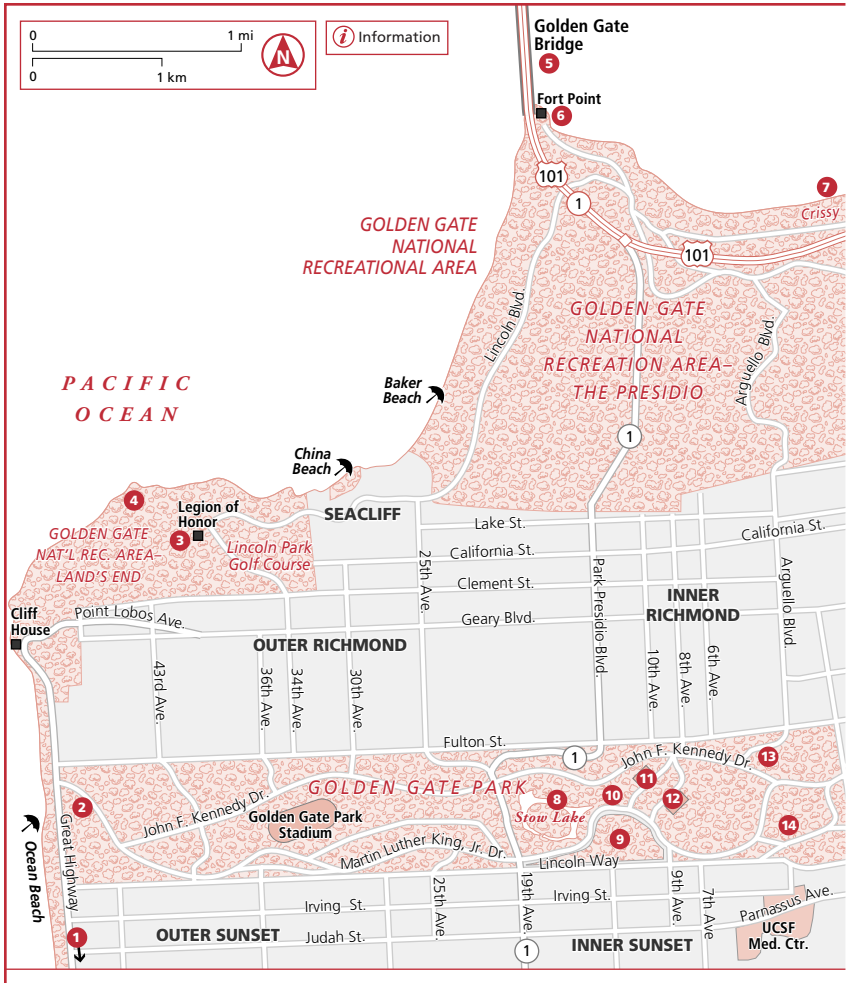
San Francisco attractions fall into three categories. First are those that are specifically designed for kids, such as the Exploratorium and the Bay Area Discovery Museum. Most of the ones I've listed in this chapter are of such high quality, or in such a scenic setting, that parents will take pleasure in them as well. Second are attractions not specifically geared to kids, but that children would surely enjoy. Quite a few fall into this category, including riding the cable cars or strolling through bustling, colorful Chinatown.

Third are those attractions that may fascinate parents, but that younger kids will probably find a yawn. Fortunately, there aren't too many of these. Only a few indoor attractions will require a level of restraint beyond some kids' abilities. Fortunately, on weekend days many local museums offer drop-off art activities for kids. In other instances, you may be able to strike a deal with the little ones, where an hour (or less) of their patience can be immediately rewarded with a kid-friendly activity. The California Palace of the Legion of Honor has nearby hiking trails, the de Young Museum is right in fun-filled Golden Gate Park, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is adjacent to Yerba Buena Gardens and its children's activities.

In fact, the biggest challenge you may face on your San Francisco vacation is prioritizing amongst all the options. My best advice is to slow down and not try to do everything, particularly if you're traveling with very young children. Where possible, work in times for the kids to rest or play. Plan the big stuff in the morning, when everyone has more energy, and save afternoons for more leisurely pursuits. Above all, be flexible. If energy levels have suddenly dropped off, be ready to head back to the hotel—or to the nearest playground. As with much in life, less may be more. Fortunately, San Francisco is so lovely that just parking your family by a grassy knoll and having a picnic could be a worthy activity in itself.

Tips Fueling the Troops

Vacationing in a city is hard work, especially with small children. Keep them going with regular feedings, something healthy mid-morning and something more fun mid-afternoon. If you end up with dinner reservations after 7:30pm, bolster the kids around 5pm with a little snack so that they don't collapse in a heap waiting for supper.



Alcatraz Island Ferries **34**
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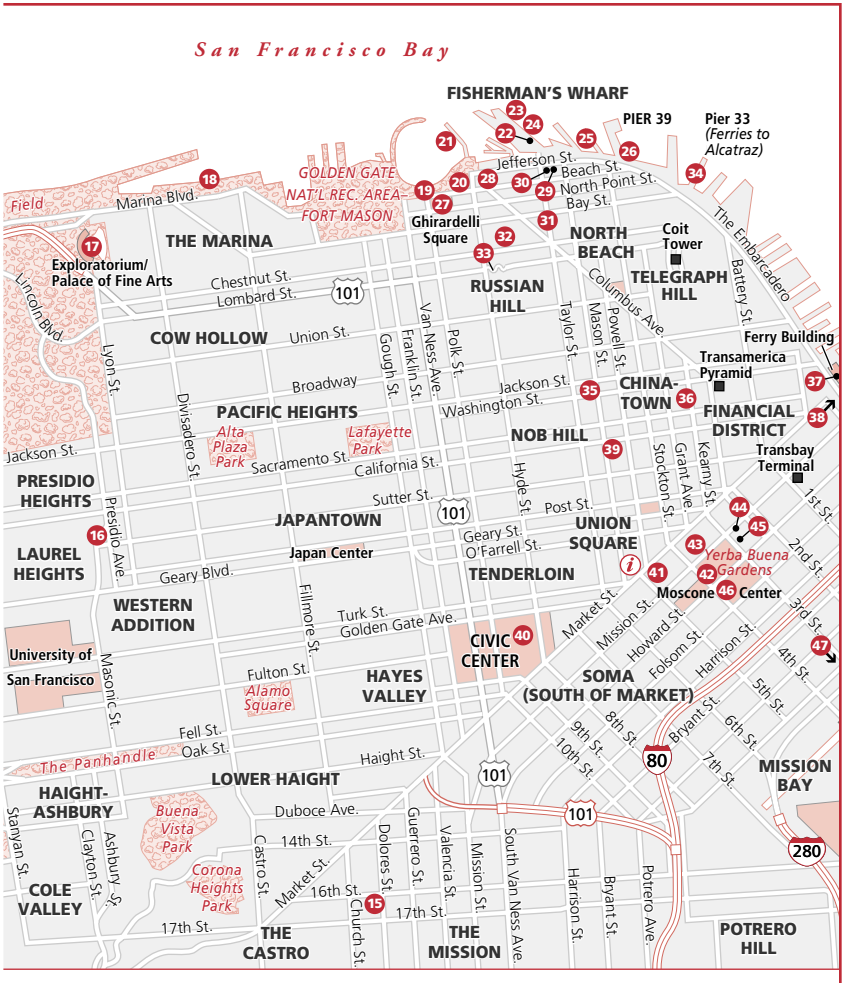
Koret Children's Quarter **14**
Land's End **4**



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1 THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Alcatraz Island ★★★ Ages 10 and up. Spanish for "pelican," Alcatraz was so named in 1775 by Juan Manuel Ayala for the birds that nested there. From the 1850s to 1933, the military used Alcatraz as a fort to protect the bay's shoreline. In 1934, the government converted it into a maximum-security prison to house the country's most hardened criminals, including Al Capone, "Machine Gun" Kelly, and Robert Stroud (the Birdman). Given the sheer cliffs, frigid waters, and treacherous currents, the Alcatraz prison was considered inescapable.

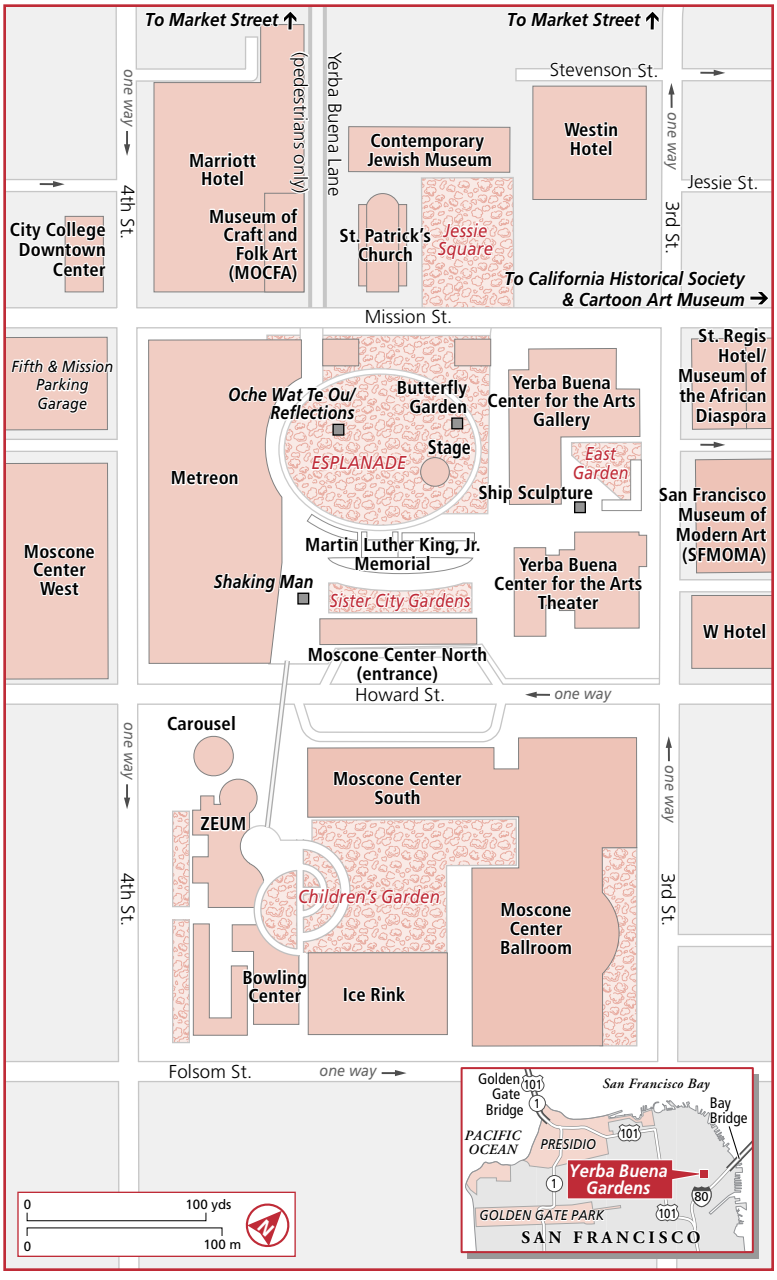
I first toured Alcatraz when I was 12, and never forgot it. Stories of escape attempts and the harsh conditions on the island fascinated me. Families today will be no less moved by the audio tour, which features narration by former guards and prisoners. One story details how over several weeks three prisoners patiently enlarged the air vents in their cells with spoons and crafted dummy heads that appeared to be sleeping so they could escape overnight undetected. You even get to see the dummy heads, a detail my kids enjoyed. Another story details a gruesome shoot-'em-up escape attempt, which may be the part teenage boys most enjoy. The audio tour gives a wonderfully rich and eerie sense of what it was like to be isolated in the middle of the bay—with unforgiving winds blustering through the barred windows and armed guards pacing the gun galley—yet so achingly close to the beautiful city of San Francisco.

With such a captivating history, it's no wonder Alcatraz has been the subject of so many Hollywood movies, including *Birdman of Alcatraz, Escape from Alcatraz,* and *The Rock.* My bet is that most young kids will enjoy the trip, which after all starts out with a fun ferry ride across the bay, although particularly sensitive children could get spooked by some of the audio tour's eerier details. Wear jackets (it's quite brisk out on the bay) and comfortable shoes—you'll be doing lots of walking. The ferry sells snacks, but you may want to bring some munchies along because the whole trip could take up to 2 1/2 hours. Also, reserve for Alcatraz well in advance. I recommend booking the earliest ferry possible—the island will be less crowded and your kids more energetic.

In addition to doing the audio tour of the cell block, those visiting during fall and winter can view an orientation video about the island itself and tour the grounds outside the prison on a walking path. (The trail is closed during bird-nesting season from mid-Feb to early Sept.) Older kids who don't frighten easily might enjoy the spooky "Alcatraz After Hours" tour. The ferry departs at 6:15 and 7pm during the summer; at 4:20 and 5:10pm in winter. Tours are Thursday through Sunday only. (Fares for the evening tour are $33 for adults, $31 for seniors 62-plus, $32 for kids 12–17, $20 for kids 5–11.)

Pier 41, at Fisherman's Wharf, the Embarcadero. ✆ **415/981-7625** for information and tickets. www.nps.gov/alcatraz for information or www.alcatrazcruises.com for tickets. Admission (includes ferry): $26 adults, $25 seniors 62 and older, $16 children 5–11, free children 4 and under. Audio $8 adults, $5.50 children 11 and under and seniors. Daily in winter 9:30am–1:55pm; daily in summer 9:30am–3:55pm. Ferries run approximately every half-hour. Arrive 30 min. before ferry departure in summer; 45 min. before in winter. Muni: F-Market streetcar; Powell-Mason cable car; or no. 30-Stockton bus, which stops 1 block south.

Angel Island ★★ All ages. Some weeks before writing these words I watched Angel Island, the Bay's largest island, ablaze from my home office window. Probably caused by a campfire, in late 2008 tossing flames burnt more than half of the isle's 740 acres. Fortunately, the fire did not claim any historic buildings from Angel Island's rich past. It has served as a Miwok Indian hunting and fishing ground; a port for Spanish, British,


To Market Street
To Market Street
one way
4th St.
(pedestrians only)
Yerba Buena Lane
Stevenson St.
one way
3rd St.
Jessie St.
Marriott Hotel
Museum of Craft and Folk Art (MOCFA)
Contemporary Jewish Museum
Westin Hotel
City College Downtown Center
St. Patrick's Church
Jessie Square
To California Historical Society & Cartoon Art Museum
Mission St.
Fifth & Mission Parking Garage
Oche Wat Te Ou/ Reflections
Butterfly Garden
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Gallery
St. Regis Hotel/ Museum of the African Diaspora
Stage
ESPLANADE
East Garden
Metreon
Ship Sculpture
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA)
Moscone Center West
Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater
Shaking Man
Sister City Gardens
W Hotel
Moscone Center North (entrance)
Howard St.
one way
Carousel
Moscone Center South
ZEUM
Children's Garden
Moscone Center Ballroom
Bowling Center
Ice Rink
Folsom St.
one way
0
100 yds
0
100 m
Golden Gate Bridge
San Francisco Bay
Bay Bridge
PACIFIC OCEAN
PRESIDIO
Yerba Buena Gardens
GOLDEN GATE PARK
SAN FRANCISCO

Tips Planning Ahead

You must reserve Alcatraz tour tickets at least 2 weeks in advance in the summer. Call ✆ **415/981-7625** to purchase them over the phone, or buy them online at www.alcatrazcruises.com. The What-to-Do-While-Waiting-for-the-Ferry-to-Alcatraz Quiz:

1. In what bay is Alcatraz Island located?

a. Marin Bay
b. San Francisco Bay
c. The Bay Area

2. When was Alcatraz a federal maximum-security prison?

a. 1934 to 1963
b. 1893 to 1964
c. 1920 to 1973

3. Which one of these people was a famous Alcatraz inmate?

a. Mack the Knife
b. Fred Flintstone
c. Al Capone

4. How big was the average cell?

a. 5 by 9 feet
b. 10 by 12 feet
c. 4 by 6 feet

5. How many prisoners were executed at Alcatraz?

a. 3
b. 0
c. 8

6. Which three men managed to escape Alcatraz but were never seen again?

a. The Ringling Brothers and Marshall Pickford
b. Bobby Carson, Al Capone, and Danny Marsh
c. Frank Morris and the Anglin Brothers

and Mexican ships; and a pre-Civil War U.S. military base. From 1910 to 1940 it was a detention center mainly for Asian immigrants. The China Cove station at this "Ellis Island of the West" recalls an era when anti-immigration policies placed hundreds of Chinese into forced detention for weeks, months, and sometimes years. Poems carved into barrack walls by lonely detainees were rediscovered in 1970 and inspired the preservation effort.

In recent years, Angel Island has drawn hikers and bikers who spend the day picnicking on the island and trekking on its many trails, before summiting 788-foot-high Mount Livermore to take in stunning views of San Francisco and Marin County. As this went to press, Angel Island was open with restricted access; visitors could still explore the historic sites and take a tram or Segway tours on the 5-mile path that circles the island. Those 1-hour motorized **tram tours** are usually offered between March and November,

7. How many cells were there?
a. 455
b. 336
c. 90

8. What was the highest number of prisoners held at Alcatraz?
a. 325
b. 302
c. 208

9. What was the lowest number of prisoners held at Alcatraz?
a. 222
b. 105
c. 97

10. How long did the average prisoner stay?
a. Life sentence
b. 8 years
c. 25 years

11. What was the nickname prisoners gave Alcatraz?
a. "The Island"
b. "The Cage"
c. "The Rock"

12. Approximately how many tourists visit Alcatraz each year?
a. More than 2 million
b. More than 1 million
c. About 750,000

Answers:
1) b 2) a 3) c 4) a 5) b 6) c 7) b 8) b 9) a 10) b 11) c 12) b

but it would be best to phone ✆ **415/897-0715** or check www.angelisland.com for details. Hopefully bikes, which can be brought in by ferry or rented on the island, were not permitted to return.

Angel Island Association, P.O. Box 866. ✆ **415/435-1915** or 415/435-3972. www.angelisland.org. Segway tour info: ✆ **415/897-0715,** www.angelisland.com. Access to Angel Island is by ferry from Pier 41. Daily Blue & Gold Fleet round-trip tickets, which include state park fees, are $15 adults, $9 children 5-11, free children 4 and under. Phone ✆ **415/773-1188** or visit www.blueandgoldfleet.com for tickets and schedules. Open daily 8am to sunset year-round.

Cable Cars ★★ **All ages.** These beloved wooden icons, the only moving landmarks in the National Register of Historic Places, are not the most practical mode of transportation in San Francisco, but they are certainly the most fun and a delightful part of any first-time visit to the city.

As the story goes, in 1869 British-born engineer Andrew Hallidie observed a team of overworked horses pulling a heavily laden carriage up a steep, rain-swept San Francisco hill. One horse slipped and the car rolled back, dragging the other horses and everything else down with it. Right then Hallidie resolved to create a mechanical device to replace these beasts of burden, and by 1873 the first cable car traversed Clay Street. The cars have no engines. Instead, a steel cable is housed just under the street in a rail, kind of like an inside-out train rail. Powered by electricity, this cable constantly moves, or runs, through the rail—making a distinctive clickity-clacking sound. Each cable car has a lever that when pulled back, closes a pincer-like grip on the cable. The person who pulls the lever is thus called a "gripper," not a driver. The cable car is then attached to the cable that runs through the rail under the pavement, and the car begins to move at a constant 9 1/2 mph—the speed at which the cable is set to travel.

As electric streetcars and buses became more economical, San Francisco's mayor planned in 1947 to do away with the few cable cars still around. Alarmed, a group of private citizens lobbied successfully to save the city's three remaining cable car lines. Between 1982 and 1984, the city completely refurbished these lines and seismically retrofitted the Cable Car Barn on Mason and Washington streets.

The Powell-Hyde line is the most scenic, passing crooked Lombard Street before heading down Russian Hill towards Ghirardelli Square and offering a breathtaking vista of Alcatraz and the San Francisco Bay. Unfortunately, the wait for this route, and the Powell-Mason line, is seemingly interminable. Solutions are to catch the car early in the morning or after dinner. Another option is to take the California Street line, which runs through Chinatown and over Nob Hill, as lines to board the cars are a bit shorter.

Powell at Market or California at Market sts. Tickets $5 one-way; $11 for an all-day pass. $1 one-way with a Muni weekly; free with a Muni monthly pass; free with a Muni Passport and for children under 5. Hours of operation are 6am–1:30am.

Crissy Field ★★★ **All ages.** A 4-year effort converted this abandoned U.S. airfield into a lovely national park, and it is a wonderful retreat for the whole family. My husband and I take our kids here regularly, as well as any visitors who come into town. The kids can climb all over the grassy knolls or play at the beach while the adults savor the spectacular views of the Golden Gate Bridge to the west and the San Francisco skyline to the east. There's nothing specific to "do" here, so there's a chance teens will find it boring. For everyone else, the spot is so relaxing and beautiful, it's well worth a visit. The 100-acre site has a tidal marsh, sheltered picnic area, bike path, walking path, cafe, bookstore, and education center. You can pass through here on a hike to Fort Point, or just come for lunch at the Warming Hut. Located at the park's western end, the Warming Hut has a great gift shop and a tasty organic cafe menu developed with input from renowned chef Alice Waters of Berkeley's Chez Panisse.

Crissy Field Center, Building 603 on the corner of Mason and Halleck sts. ✆ **415/561-7690.** www.crissyfield.org. Center program offices Tues–Sat 9am–5pm. Crissy Field Center Cafe and Warming Hut daily 9am–5pm. Muni: no. 28-19th Ave., no. 29-Sunset, or no. 43-Masonic bus.

Exploratorium ★★★ **All ages.** Some time ago *Scientific American* magazine described the Exploratorium as "the best science museum in the world." Most young visitors would still agree. The cavernous space, a former airplane hanger, is crammed with displays that encourage viewer participation. The exhibits are thematic, with matter examined near the entrance, examples of momentum and inertia by the cafe, light and optics at the rear, and biology and electricity on the mezzanine. Clearly written text

describes each exhibit, and several teens volunteer as "explainers" to help out the most science-challenged among us.

Even with the explainers' help, kids younger than 6 may not grasp the science behind each of the 650-plus exhibits. But they'll still love fiddling with a machine that makes sand patterns with sound waves, a camera that photographs your shadow, or a massive soap-bubble maker. My older kids can easily spend a day here—more hours than I can handle. Given the dim lighting and ever-present crowds, this stimulating environment could overwhelm some, even as it enthralls others. Because most exhibits are hands-on, kids will be pushing, pulling, or doing whatever it takes to have a go at some nifty contraption. If your little ones can't fend for themselves, don't hesitate to tell big kids their turn is up. They usually politely step aside.

You can take your toddler to the under-4s play area for a break, but it seems a shame to spend too much time there, since it just has blocks and other items you'd find at any preschool. Better to step outside to the **Palace of Fine Arts** grounds that house the Exploratorium. The only remaining structure left of the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition, the lovely domed Palace and its adjacent grass and pond serve as the backdrop for many a wedding photo. Near the back of the museum is a cafe where you can pick up items for a picnic outside, including peanut butter sandwiches, free-range chicken salads, and hot dogs made from naturally raised beef. (An espresso stand at the entrance also sells coffee, ice cream, and cookies.) Older kids will really enjoy the **Tactile Dome,** where participants crawl, slide, and slowly walk through the dome in complete darkness, feeling their way along a variety of surfaces. Reservations are required in advance, and you must buy a separate, pricey $17 ticket. Phone ✆ **415/561-0362** for times and tickets.

Palace of Fine Arts, 3601 Lyon St. at Marina Blvd. ✆ **415/397-5673.** www.exploratorium.org. Admission $14 adults; $11 seniors, students with ID, and youth 13–17; $9 children 4–12; free for children under 4. Tactile Dome $17. Free first Wed of every month. Tues–Sun 10am–5pm. Closed on Mondays except Memorial, Labor, President's, and Martin Luther King, Jr. days. Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas. Closed Dec. 24 at 3pm. Muni: no. 30-Stockton bus.

Ferry Building Marketplace ★★★ **All ages.** San Franciscans have a thing about food—especially local, organic, and naturally raised food—so it's no surprise that a building devoted to gourmet fare should be considered a major attraction in its own right. It helps, of course, that the historic 1898 building underwent a 4-year, multi-million-dollar renovation (completed in 2003), and that it is located on the picturesque Embarcadero, with lovely views of the Bay Bridge and East Bay hills.

The best time to visit is early on Saturday morning, before half of San Francisco arrives for its weekly shopping spree at the **Ferry Building Farmer's Market.** There you'll find booths featuring organic fruits and vegetables, artisan cheeses, naturally raised meats, fresh bread, and so on. You could make a meal out of the free samples doled out by proud farmers and cooks, but it's worth holding back so that you can buy breakfast from one of the restaurant trailer cars in back. Purchase your scrambled eggs with wild mushrooms, fresh tamales, and chorizo, or soft shell crab on sourdough, and enjoy it on a bayside bench with a view of the ferries going to and fro. Kids will also enjoy the musicians who come by on Saturday mornings to entertain shoppers and earn some change.

A smaller version of the market occurs on Tuesdays. Even on non–farmers' market days, the building's scenic location, historic architecture (including a 240-ft. clock tower), and collection of upscale food shops—featuring everything from top-quality olive oil and rare-breed meat to exotic funghi and handmade chocolates—make it well worth a visit.

One Ferry Building. ✆ **415/291-3276** (Farmer's Market) or 415/693-0996 (Ferry Building). www.ferrybuildingmarketplace.com. Free admission. Ferry Building Mon–Fri 10am–6pm; Sat 9am–6pm; Sun 11am–5pm. Farmer's Market Sat 8am–2pm; Tues 10am–2pm. Closed major holidays. Muni: F-Market streetcar.

Lombard Street ★ **All ages.** My family and I lived near the "crookedest street in the world" (actually a 1-block-long section of another wise unremarkable avenue) for more than 5 years, and I still don't get why cars line up for blocks to drive down it. That said, I think Lombard Street is worth checking out on foot, and even worth driving down on weekday mornings when it's blissfully uncrowded. Not to disappoint the little ones, but Lombard Street isn't even the crookedest street in San Francisco (Vermont St. btw. 20th and 22nd sts. in Potrero Hill is), but it is the most scenic. The zigzags were added in the 1920s, as the street's 27° pitch was too steep for cars. Cars are only permitted to descend, but pedestrians can take the stairs on either side. The street is loveliest in spring, when the hydrangeas are in bloom. At all times of year it offers views of Telegraph Hill and Coit Tower.

Lombard St. (btw. Hyde and Leavenworth sts.)

Metreon **All ages.** This always-packed modern cement-and-glass entertainment center houses retail shops, an IMAX theater, 15 movie screens, an extensive arcade operated by Tilt, and occasional museum-style exhibits. In the center on the ground floor is an interactive floor display with colored lights that react to one's movements and steps; young kids can't seem to get enough of it. Among the choices in the arcade, a favorite is Hyperbowl, a futuristic, big-screen virtual game where players "bowl" through the streets of San Francisco. Noisy and dark, the arcade is highly appealing to kids and young adults. (Children under 18 have to be accompanied by an adult in this area after 8pm.)

Among the few shops are three home-electronics stores. The PlayStation shop is always crowded with kids of all ages trying the latest in video games, and gadget nuts can audition the latest and greatest in equipment at the Sony Style store. With a food court on the lower level and Yerba Buena Center out the back, this complex is popular with teenagers from all over town.

101 4th St. (at Mission). ✆ **415/369-6000.** www.metreon.com. Free admission. Individual attraction prices range from $6–$20. 10am–9pm Sun–Thurs; 10am–10pm Fri–Sat. For Tilt, call ✆ 415/979-9163. Muni: Any streetcar to Powell St. station.

The San Francisco Zoo ★★★ **All ages.** Every child will love this fun, educational menagerie. Established in 1929, San Francisco's 125-acre, oceanside zoo is continuously adding to its impressive array of exhibits. Count on spending an entire morning or afternoon here. If you've arrived in summer and found the zoo draped in fog, stop by the gift shop to pick up an overpriced logo fleece. Rest assured that proceeds from the purchase, or from any of the unusual gifts you might pick up there, go to a good cause.

For some reason, my toddler's favorite zoo animals are the pink flamingos. He tries mightily to climb into their swampy home, so we always have to pass by it carefully. His older sisters prefer the Lipman Family Lemur Forest, which houses five endangered lemur species. Watch the lemurs leap among the trees and climb special towers into which visitors can hoist lemur-appropriate food. At the 3-acre "African Savanna" giraffes, zebras, dik-diks, and other large mammals live together alongside colorful African bird species. Among the many other exhibits are the Hearst Grizzly Gulch, the world's largest grizzly zoo environment; the Doelger Primate Discovery Center, housing some of the earth's most endangered primates; an Australian walkabout featuring to kangaroos and

Tips Zoo Events

The zoo has special events throughout the year and daily activities for visitors. Most days you can meet the zookeepers during animal feedings. Its resident grizzly bears are fed at 10:30am daily, penguins at 2:30pm, and giraffes at 4pm. Also, daily in the summer and on weekends the rest of the year you can attend "Meet the Keeper" talks at these times: "Meerkats and Prairie Dogs" at 2pm; "Incredible Insects in Action" at 2:45pm; and "Native American Animals" at 3:15 and 3:45pm. For dates of events such as Family Overnights, phone or check the website.

wallabies; a South American Tropical Forest Building, with a 15-foot-long anaconda; and the Lion House, with its rare breed tigers. (Rest assured that following a tragic accident in late 2007, the big cat exhibit has been redesigned for additional safety. The public big cat feedings are on hold.)

The zoo has reinstated its classic "Storybooks:" kids can take plastic animal-shaped keys (purchased at the entrance for $3) and place them in various sites around the zoo to hear stories and fun animal facts, in many languages. Also, for $7 a GPS Zoofinder takes visitors on a so-called "behind the scenes" tour.

The Children's Zoo is a destination in itself. Kids can crawl through tunnels underneath the exhibit of meerkats and prairie dogs, which pop up out of their own tunnels. At the Family Farm, kids may feed various rare and endangered breeds of goats and sheep, and visit horses and ponies. In the Hatchery, your children can observe incubated chick eggs in various stages of development and help feed newly born chicks. And the Insect House will fascinate them with giant walking sticks, tarantulas, and even a massive cockroach display. (Yech.)

Little ones will also enjoy the playground structure, the Dentzel carousel ($2/ride), and the cute little steam train (which requires a $4 ticket). The best place to lunch in the zoo is the Leaping Lemur cafe, which serves a mix of healthy and greasy choices including pizza, burgers, California rolls, salads, and sweets. The zoo is free the first Wednesday of the month; in summer, first Wednesdays are so crowded that you're better off paying the entrance fee and coming on any other day.

1 Zoo Rd., at the Great Highway. ✆ **415/753-7080.** www.sfzoo.org. Admission $15 adults, $12 seniors 65-plus and youths 12–17, $9 children 4–14, free for children 3 and under. Disabled visitors receive 50% discount. Discounts for San Francisco residents. Free the first Wed of the month. Stroller rentals are available; kids' "jeeps and wagons" each sit 2 children for $9/each. Daily 10am–5pm. (Children's Zoo until 4:30pm). Muni: L-Taraval streetcar. Show your transfer for $1 discount on admission.

Yerba Buena Gardens and Center for the Arts ★★★ All ages. Since 1993, this 22-acre complex has served as an oasis of culture, fun, and greenery amidst an extremely urban slice of town. The center's two buildings, which include a 775-seat theater and three galleries, feature theatre, dance, and contemporary arts, often by local and emerging artists. Dance troupes, including ODC/San Francisco and Smuin Ballets/SF, call this space home. They perform periodic children's events as well.

Older kids will appreciate the art/technology center **Zeum,** which is detailed below. Younger kids will love the 1906 carousel; the playground with its two really, really tall slides; and the **Yerba Buena Ice-Skating Rink and Bowling Center.** Public skating times at the city's only year-round facility vary daily, so phone before making the trip over

Rainy-Day Activities

San Francisco is no Seattle, but rainy days can get in the way of enjoying our city. More often, the damp, misty fog is what really gets to folks, especially in July when the rest of the country is working on its suntan. But you don't have time to grouse about the weather. You have things to do, places to see . . . oh, you don't like getting wet? Okay. Here are a few rainy/foggy-day options.

- **Take high tea.** High tea at one of the many hotels that offers it is perhaps the most civilized way to keep dry. Try the **Westin St. Francis,** 335 Powell St. (✆ **415/397-7000**); the **Palace Hotel,** 2 New Montgomery St. (✆ **415/512-1111**); the **Fairmont Hotel,** 950 Mason St. (✆ **415/772-5000**); or the **Ritz-Carlton,** 600 Stockton St. (✆ **415/296-7465**). **Neiman Marcus** also has a lovely, reasonably priced tea service in the **Rotunda** restaurant, 150 Stockton St. (✆ **415/362-3900**), from 2:30 to 5pm daily.
- **Rock climb.** Rather than having the kids climb the walls of your hotel room, take everyone indoor rock climbing at **Mission Cliffs Rock Climbing Center** at 2295 Harrison St., at 19th Street (✆ **415/550-0515**). Open daily, the world-class facility caters to beginners and experts of all ages—teaching belay (rope handling) classes and renting whatever equipment is necessary, including shoes. Those who prefer to keep their feet on the ground will enjoy the on-site gym with locker rooms and sauna. (p. 216).
- **Read a book.** The Fisherman's Wharf branch of **Barnes & Noble Booksellers** at 2552 Taylor St. (✆ **415/292-6762**) has a cafe downstairs and a spacious children's book section upstairs, complete with kid-sized tables, chairs, and a train set. (You can also check p. 267 for times when **public library branches** offer children's story times.)

here. The tidy 12-lane bowling alley has bumpers available for novice bowlers, shoes, and a small menu of snacks.

Even if you don't have time for a round of bowling, take a moment to walk through the lovely grounds, which include a 5-acre garden dramatically framed by the city skyline. Among the many fountains is a particularly striking one designed in homage to Martin Luther King, Jr. In summer months, the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival features free classical and jazz concerts, an international music festival, dance and film series, and numerous events specifically for families and children.

701 Mission St. (at 3rd St.). ✆ **415/978-2700** or 415/978-ARTS (2787; box office). www.ybca.org. Yerba Buena Ice Skating and Bowling Center: 750 Folsom St. (btw. 3rd and 4th sts.). ✆ **415/777-3727.** www.skatebowl.com. Skating admission $8 adults, $5.50 seniors, $6.25 children 12 and under. Skate rental $3. Bowling Center Sun–Thurs 10am–10pm; Fri–Sat 10am–midnight. Admission for adults starts at $4.50 per lane per game or $25 per lane per hour, although holiday rates increase to $7/game or $40/hour. Shoe rental $4. Advanced lane reservations are possible (rates increase to $25/hour). Muni: Any streetcar to Powell St. station; 14, 30, 45, 74X bus.

- **Watch the weather.** Admire the storm from the confines of the **Cliff House** (p. 149), open daily . The Cliff House Restaurant off ers drinks, dec ent food, and amazing vistas . The near est museum is the **Palace of the L egion of Honor** (p. 178), another g reat plac e to wait out the rain. The no. 18-46th Avenue bus will bring y ou to both locations .
- **Seek shelter under a living r oof.** Sure to be a t op attrac tion for years to come, the **California A cademy of S ciences** (p. 178) pr omises a full af ternoon of ent ertainment and learning f or ev eryone in the family .
- **Get some cultur al edifica tion.** No w y ou ha ve an ex cuse t o spend mor e than 15 minut es in a museum. The **Asian A rt Museum** (p. 176) and the **de Young Museum** are my picks f or ha ving the most k id-friendly exhibits.
- **Photograph your shadow.** Try that and other wack y science "experiments" at the **Exploratorium** (p. 160). You could spend hours at this superb science museum; just bear in mind that on rain y days ev eryone else is her e, too.
- **Head to S oMa.** The **Metreon** and **Yerba Buena G ardens** make up a one - stop rain y-day ha ven. **Zeum** will ent ertain y oung k ids and t weens, while teens will enjo y the ar cade at the M etreon. Take ev eryone bo wling and ice-skating, or cat ch a mo vie.
- **Stay dr y on the F-Mark et str eetcar.** Grab an umbr ella, then g rab a seat for a ride t o the F erry Building. Ha ve lunch, buy some sw eets at Rec chiuti Confections, and jump back on the F-M arket t oward **The C annery.** There you can check out a f ew fun shops f or the k ids, including Lark I n The Morning Musique Shoppe , with its wack y c ollection of musical instruments.

Zeum ★ **All ages.** This fun art/technology center with hands-on labs lets kids cr eate animated video shor ts with clay figur es; experiment with graphics, sound, and video in the production laboratory; and even create their own computer graphic animation characters. Students fr om the American Conser vatory Theater (ACT) also stage dramas in Zeum's theater. Although the center was initially designed for older kids and teens, I' ve seen plenty of young kids having a gr eat time there.

221 4th St. (at Ho ward St.). ✆ **415/820-3320.** w ww.zeum.com. F or inf ormation on A CT pr ograms at Zeum, call the Yerba Buena bo x offic e at ✆ 415/978-AR TS (2787) or visit w ww.actactortraining.org. Admission $10 adults , $10 seniors and students , $8 k ids 3–18, childr en under 2 fr ee. Wed–Fri 1–5pm, Sat–Sun 11am–5pm; mid-June–mid-Aug Tues–Sun 11am–5pm. Carousel open daily 11am–6pm. ($4 f or 2 rides.) Muni: Any streetcar to Powell St. station; 14, 30, 45, 74X bus .

CHINATOWN ★★★

The first Chinese arriv ed in California in the 1800s to wor k as ser vants. Then in 1848, gold was disco vered at S utter's M ill, and thousands of Chinese immigrants left the Opium Wars and famine in their o wn country to seek their for tunes in the California

"Gold Mountain." Intending to send their riches home, they found life in California didn't quite live up to their expectations. First employed in the gold mines and later working on the railroads, Chinese laborers were essentially indentured servants and faced constant prejudice.

The 1906 earthquake and fire destroyed much of Chinatown, and Chinese refugees swamped relief camps in San Francisco and Oakland. A group of city officials tried to permanently relocate them outside the city center, but the threat to political relations with China and the potential loss of lucrative Asian trade to other western ports put an end to this plan. So Chinatown continued to grow and thrive, in part because Chinese people were not allowed to buy homes outside of the area until 1950. Today Chinatown remains one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the country and has become a top tourist attraction in the area. To the local residents, Chinatown is a complete community—where they shop, socialize, attend school, exercise, worship, and play. The crowds of tourists don't seem to faze anyone—not the grandmas with babies tied to their backs, the groups of schoolchildren, the senior citizens practicing tai chi in the park, or the masses of determined Saturday shoppers.

Any cable car will drop you in or near Chinatown. Walking around Chinatown, diving into the shops, sampling pork buns, and eyeing the sidewalk fruit and vegetable displays can be more than enough entertainment for an afternoon. But, just in case, here are some specific stops that will enhance your tour. If you want even more guidance, check out the self-guided tour of Chinatown in chapter 7.

Chinese Culture Center **Ages 10 and up.** Cross the pedestrian bridge on the east side of Portsmouth Square that leads directly into the third floor of the Holiday Inn. This is the home of the Chinese Culture Center. Within its small well-lit gallery, ever-changing exhibits may feature photographs of pre-earthquake Chinatown, Chinese brush paintings, or *liu li* (glasswork) by contemporary Chinese artists. Entrance is free and the center is small. Kids won't have a chance to get bored and they'll likely see something beautiful. The center also offers classes and walks. It's a good resource for locals and visitors with an interest in Asian art and culture.

750 Kearny St., 3rd Floor. ✆ **415/986-1822.** www.c-c-c.org. Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–4pm.

The Chinese Historical Society of America **Ages 10 and up.** This is a good place to develop an appreciation of the Chinese experience in California, and also worth a quick drop-in to add a little gravity to your day before digging into that dim sum. A museum and research center, the Historical Society documents the fascinating history of the Chinese in California through photographs, art, and changing exhibits. Its bookstore stocks children's titles as well as fiction and nonfiction on Chinese themes. The center also hosts occasional tours during the year, such as a "Ghosts of Chinatown" tour before Halloween, at additional cost.

Fun Facts **Stump the Tour Guide**

Question: Where did Thomas Watson answer the phone when Alexander Graham Bell made the first transcontinental telephone call from New York City? ***Answer:*** At the now long-gone Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company on Grant Avenue and Bush Street, San Francisco, on January 25, 1915.

Fortune Cookies

Those crisp y c ookies with wise , pr escient, or just plain c onfusing sa yings slipped inside ar en't Chinese at all . While the orig in of f ortune c ookies isn't exactly k nown, they ar e believ ed t o ha ve been in vented in San F rancisco b y Makoto Hag iwara, who managed the Japanese Tea G arden in Golden G ate Park from 1895 until 1925. You can visit a f ortune cookie factory on Ross Alley in Chinat own (see abo ve), and with this r ecipe y ou can make the c ookies yourself at home , c omplete with y our o wn fabulous f ortunes.

Ingredients

1/4 cup flour

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1 tablespoon cornstarch

2 tablespoons oil

1 egg white, beaten until stiff

1/4 teaspoon vanilla

4 tablespoons water

Combine flour , sugar , c ornstarch, and oil in a bo wl. F old in the beat en egg white. A dd vanilla and wat er. The batt er should ha ve the thin c onsistency of crepe batter; if it's too thick, add more water. In a small nonstick or lightly oiled skillet over medium heat, pour one tablespoon of the batt er, spreading it out into a 3-inch circle. Cook until browned, about 3 minut es. Turn the cookie and cook 1 minut e more. Remov e from the pan and plac e a paper f ortune in the center. F old in half , then bend the tips t o form the f ortune c ookie shape. Be careful—the cookie will be hot. Plac e in an egg car ton to hold the shape until cool. Makes about 12 cookies.

965 Clay St. ✆ **415/391-1188.** www.chsa.org. Admission $3 adults, $2 seniors and college students, $1 children 6–17, free children under 6. Free first Thurs of month. Tues–Fri noon–5pm; Sat noon–4pm.

Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Company ★ **All ages.** You can't miss with a visit to this factory, where golden discs quickly become crispy cookies complete with a fortune. The place is small, and y ou may have to wait y our turn to watch the ladies handle the cookie-making machine. Bags of fortune cookies and yummy almond cookies to munch while you continue your excursion are available for a fe w dollars. The locals themselv es prefer their cookies flat and r ound, without the little sayings tucked inside (they 've read enough fortunes for a lifetime.) You can also buy cookies in their unfolded form—although they're not nearly as much fun. If you take pictures, it's polite to leave a tip.

56 Ross Alley (btw. Jackson and Washington sts.). ✆ **415/781-3956.** Free admission. Daily 10am–7pm.

Portsmouth Square ★ **All ages.** In this spot, Yerba B uena officially became S an Francisco when Captain John Montgomery claimed the settlement for the United States in 1846 on the ev e of the M exican–American War. Chinese immigrants ran businesses close to the square even then. Today, a handy parking garage is underneath, and a section

of the park is devoted to a compact playground that entertains the local preschoolers. Benches invite contemplation of the glorious Financial District skyline featuring the Transamerica Pyramid.

Kearny St., btw. Washington and Clay sts. No phone.

Tien Hou Temple **Ages 8 and up.** Members of this temple, one of the oldest Chinese temples in the U.S., are used to elementary school students tiptoeing up the four narrow flights of stairs for a look. The sanctuary ceiling is covered in red paper lanterns, and the smell of incense is pervasive. Altars are covered with offerings, and one holds a statue of Tien Hou, also known as Tin How, the goddess of heaven and protector of fishermen. Remind the kids that this is a place for meditation and prayer—you'll likely see people doing just that—so they will need to keep the chatter down. Make a small donation or purchase some incense before heading back downstairs.

125 Waverly Place (off Clay St. btw. Stockton St. and Grant Ave.). No phone. Free admission. Daily 10am–5pm.

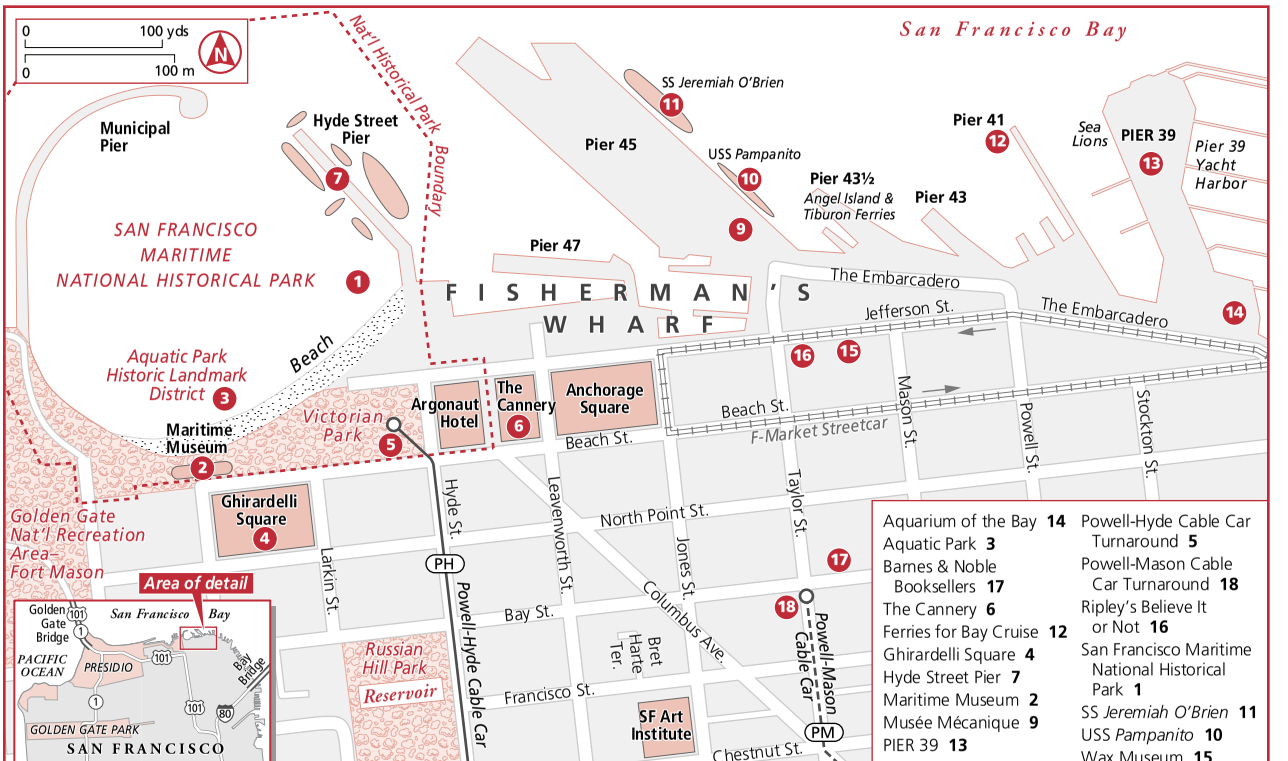
FISHERMAN'S WHARF ★

The days when fishing boats hauled their catches back to the piers along Jefferson Street ended for the most part in the late 1960s. As warehouses were retooled into shopping centers and local waters became over-fished, tourism began to supplant maritime industries. Then PIER 39 opened in 1978, completing Fisherman's Wharf's metamorphosis into a major California tourist attraction, second only to Disneyland. Unless you get up very early in the morning and seek out what's left of the fishing fleet, you won't see any picturesque scenes of flapping flounders or salty sailors. Mostly what you see at Fisherman's Wharf are tourists gravely contemplating chocolate bars and sportswear. Of course, there's more—some of it well worth your time, some not—so here's a rundown of what you'll find along the Embarcadero, and Jefferson and Beach streets, from PIER 39 to the Municipal Pier at the end of Van Ness Avenue. The Powell-Hyde cable car line will drop you off at the west end of this stretch, near The Cannery and Aquatic Park.

Aquarium of the Bay ★ **All ages.** Dedicated to the creatures that inhabit the San Francisco Bay ecosystem, this aquarium gives new meaning to the phrase "living life in a fishbowl." It's not entirely clear who's looking at whom in this attraction. After a brief introduction to the underwater world, facilitated by the Aquarium's loquacious band of naturalists, visitors descend to a moving walkway that slowly leads through two clear

Tips Discount Coupons

While many Fisherman's Wharf attractions are free or low-cost, others can dig into your pocketbook. Don't head to the Wharf without first checking the website at www.mapwest.com. Click the "Online Travel Coupons" link for $1 to $2 off on attractions such as Aquarium of the Bay, Ripley's Believe it or Not, and the Wax Museum. You may also get $3 off a Bay Cruise or $5 off a bike rental. Your hotel may help you print them out, or may even have some discount coupons available to give you. Though note available at press times, the Fisherman's Wharf Merchants Association plans to include coupons in its newly redesigned website at www.fishermanswharf.org.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N
San Francisco Bay
Nat'l Historical Park Boundary
Municipal Pier
Hyde Street Pier
SAN FRANCISCO MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
Aquatic Park Historic Landmark District
Beach
Maritime Museum
Victorian Park
Argonaut Hotel
The Cannery
Anchorage Square
Ghirardelli Square
Golden Gate Nat'l Recreation Area–Fort Mason
Area of detail
Golden Gate Bridge
San Francisco Bay
PACIFIC OCEAN
PRESIDIO
Bay Bridge
GOLDEN GATE PARK
SAN FRANCISCO
Russian Hill Park Reservoir
Larkin St.
Hyde St.
PH
Powell-Hyde Cable Car
Leavenworth St.
Jones St.
Taylor St.
Columbus Ave.
Bay St.
Francisco St.
Bret Harte Ter.
SF Art Institute
Powell-Mason Cable Car
PM
Chestnut St.
North Point St.
Beach St.
F-Market Streetcar
Mason St.
Powell St.
Stockton St.
Jefferson St.
The Embarcadero
SS Jeremiah O'Brien
Pier 45
USS Pampanito
Pier 43½
Angel Island & Tiburon Ferries
Pier 43
Pier 47
Pier 41
Sea Lions
PIER 39
Pier 39 Yacht Harbor
FISHERMAN'S WHARF
1 SAN FRANCISCO MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
2 Maritime Museum
3 Aquatic Park Historic Landmark District
4 Ghirardelli Square
5 Victorian Park
6 The Cannery
7 Hyde Street Pier
9 Musée Mécanique
10 USS Pampanito
11 SS Jeremiah O'Brien
12 Pier 41
13 PIER 39
14 The Embarcadero
15 Powell St.
16 Beach St.
17 Powell-Hyde Cable Car Turnaround
18 Powell-Mason Cable Car Turnaround
Aquarium of the Bay 14
Aquatic Park 3
Barnes & Noble Booksellers 17
The Cannery 6
Ferries for Bay Cruise 12
Ghirardelli Square 4
Hyde Street Pier 7
Maritime Museum 2
Musée Mécanique 9
PIER 39 13
Powell-Hyde Cable Car Turnaround 5
Powell-Mason Cable Car Turnaround 18
Ripley's Believe It or Not 16
San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park 1
SS Jeremiah O'Brien 11
USS Pampanito 10
Wax Museum 15

tunnels surrounded by 700,000 gallons of filtered bay water. The moving path cleverly keeps people from clustering around a particularly impressive Pacific electric stingray, so even the little ones get a chance to look in and spy an angel shark burrowing in the sand. Thousands of fish swim on either side of the walkway and overhead as well; kids find it pretty cool. The last exhibit, our youngest's favorite, contains touch pools with starfish and such. Should a trip to the Monterey Bay Aquarium be in your future, you can skip this smaller cousin altogether. But if you're already on PIER 39, it's a pleasant hour-long respite from the curios and candy shops.

PIER 39 at Fisherman's Wharf. ✆ **800/SEA-DIVE** (732-3483). www.aquariumofthebay.com. Admission $15 adults, $8 seniors and kids 3–11, free children under 3, $38 family ticket for 2 adults and 2 children. Daily in summer 9am–8pm; otherwise Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat–Sun 10am–7pm. Closed Christmas.

Ghirardelli Square **All ages.** Named after the chocolate factory founded by Domingo Ghirardelli (pronounced Gear-a-*del*-ee), this series of brick buildings was built over 11 years beginning in 1893. When the chocolate factory was moved to a lower-rent location across the bay in the 1960s, prominent San Franciscans moved in to buy and restore the property. Granted landmark status in 1982, Ghirardelli Square is now home to a three-story mall with more than 50 shops. It hosts a roster of special events, including an annual chocolate-tasting benefit in September, and streetperformers entertain regularly in the **West Plaza.** From your kids' point of view, the Square's best feature may be the Ghirardelli Ice Cream and Chocolate Shop (p. 131).

900 North Point St. (btw. Beach and Larkin sts.) ✆ **415/775-5500.** www.ghirardellisq.com. Shops open Sun–Thurs 10am–6pm; Fri–Sat 10am–9pm. Restaurants are open later.

Hyde Street Pier ★★★ **All ages.** This noteworthy homage to San Francisco's seafaring past houses eight historic, refurbished ships, three of which you can tour. You may walk for free along the lovely pier, with its breathtaking views of the Golden Gate Bridge; however, there's a modest but worthwhile fee to tour the boats. At the far end of the pier is the most striking ship, and one of the few remaining square-riggers, the majestic ***Balclutha.*** She took her maiden voyage from Cardiff, Wales, on January 15, 1887, and over the course of her working life carried coal, wheat, lumber, and finally canned salmon from Alaska. In retirement she appeared in the movie *Mutiny on the Bounty.* Completely restored, the ship hosts events throughout the year, including some just for kids. But no event need be taking place for your kids to enjoy climbing into the crew's bunks, checking out the furnished captain's quarters, and visiting the galley. The 1890 steam ferryboat ***Eureka*** was the last of 50 paddle-wheel ferries that regularly plied the bay and made its

Tips Feeling Crabby?

If your blood sugar's low, head to the seafood counters at Fisherman's Wharf. Local **Dungeness crab** season begins in November and ends in May. If you don't see crates of live crabs ready for steaming, you are buying a once-frozen, precooked crab. With a loaf of sourdough and drinks (white wine for the grown-ups, perhaps?) you have the quintessential San Francisco meal. Take the food, some napkins, and your family and look for **Fish Alley,** just to the west of Jones Street and parallel to Jefferson Street. You'll find a peaceful shelter here where you can savor your snack sitting on the dock by the bay.

Bringing Culture to the Little Ones

Do your kids' eyes glaze over at the mere mention of the word "museum"? Here are some tips for making museum visits more fun for everyone:

- **Put the younger generation in charge.** Show kids the list of exhibits and ask them what they want to see.
- **Tantalize them.** Choose the exhibit you think kids will find most interesting and go there first. You're likely to hold their interest longer.
- **Go on a hunt.** Hand an exhibit catalog to each child. Give them one point for every piece of art they can find that's pictured in the catalog. (If desperate, make the points exchangeable for chocolate.)
- **Let kids surprise you.** Sometimes kids will actually enjoy a museum more than you think. Don't just assume the expedition will be a bust, or you'll have a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- **Enhance their curriculum.** If your kids have studied any particular artists, or artistic styles, in school, they'll appreciate seeing the real thing.
- **Prioritize.** Since chances are slim you'll actually get through an entire museum, decide what's most important to you and head there early on.
- **Follow the old rules.** As with any adult excursion you've dragged your kids to, remember to go early, move quickly, and keep snacks on hand.

final trip in 1957. Restored to its original splendor at the height of the ferryboat era, the 300-foot-long side-wheeler is loaded with deck cargo, including a sizable collection of antique cars and trucks. The third boat currently on display is a 1907 ocean-going tugboat ***Hercules.***

The pier is part of the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. After visiting the pier, step into the park's **Visitor Center** across the street. Young kids will get a kick out of seeing tiny wooden models of the boats they've just toured. Or they may prefer the life-sized replica of a ship wrecked boat, complete with an eerie representation of a sailor being rescued. An hour and a half is enough time to enjoy this delightful outdoor museum and visitor's center.

Jefferson St. (at Hyde St.). ✆ **415/561-6662.** www.maritime.org. Hyde St. Pier: Admission to the pier is free, but adults 16 and older must pay $5 to board ships; kids under 17 free. Family pass, w/free admission to USS *Pampanito* is $20. Daily 9:30am–5pm, but gates close at 4:30pm. Open until 5:30pm late May–late Sept. Visitor Center: Free admission. Visitor center ✆ **415/447-5000.** Daily 9:30am–5pm (until 7pm late May–late Sept). Pier and Visitor Center closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Maritime Museum **Ages 4 and up.** Also part of the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, this white three-story structure shaped like an Art Deco ship is closed for a 3-year restoration project until 2009.

900 Beach St. (at Polk St.). Closed for restoration.

Musée Mécanique ★ **Ages 3 and up.** This may be the largest collection of antique mechanical and musical arcade games in private hands. The owner has been collecting these forerunners of pinball and video amusements since he was a kid back in the 1940s.

Fun Facts

The Pinnipeds Who Came for Dinner

The attraction that draws the largest crowds at PIER 39 is also the attraction that fails to pay rent, smells up the neighborhood, and refuses to mind its manners. That's right—it's those darned sea lions! Highly social and intelligent, sea lions have long lived in the waters around San Francisco. Traditionally, they "hauled," or hung out, if you will, on Seal Rock, which is in the Pacific Ocean below the Cliff House on the western edge of the city. The first sea lions scouting around for a more hospitable hauling spot dropped by PIER 39 in 1989, not long after K dock had been renovated but before boats had returned to this part of the marina. Herring was plentiful, the docks much more comfortable for sleeping than rocks, and the waters were safe—great white sharks and orcas, both sea lion predators, don't hunt for dinner in the bay.

By January 1990, 150 sea lions were counted around K dock, with more coming as the months passed. In the ensuing battle between the sea lions and the boat owners who'd returned to their previous moorings, the pinnipeds won handily. (Question: What do you give an 800-pound sea lion? Answer: Whatever he wants.) The boats were relocated to another part of the marina, and when K dock was eventually destroyed by the weight of all those lazy mammals, new floating docks were brought in to keep the boys happy. At last count (in Sept 2001), 1,139 sea lions were hauling out beside PIER 39—apparently they like it here. Volunteers from the Marine Mammal Center are available to answer all your questions about sea lions at their center on the second floor of PIER 39.

Fortune-tellers, an intricate model of a fairground with working parts, an amazing baseball game, and the famous Laughing Sal, whose laugh really is infectious, are among dozens of machines from around the world in pristine condition. The museum space itself has no charm, and the crowds are ceaseless, but kids will be highly entertained here—so bring a roll of quarters with you.

Pier 45 Set A (at Taylor St.). ✆ **415/346-2000.** www.museemecanique.org. Free admission. Mon–Fri 10am–7pm; Sat 10am–8pm.

PIER 39 **All ages.** A two-level Venetian carousel beckons near the back of this ever-crowded wooden pier, its music competing with the footfalls of a herd of out-of-towners and the deafening noise of the video arcade hall on the left. On either side stretching back to the entryway are T-shirt shops, fried food counters, souvenirs vendors, candy stores . . . the commercialism goes on and on. Golden views of Alcatraz are clearly visible from the end of the pier, and huge sea lions loaf around on K dock to the west (follow the barking) from September through June. The ferries for Alcatraz and bay cruises leave from Pier 41 next door, but the Blue & Gold Fleet ticket office is part of this complex. Restaurants galore, including the **Hard Rock Cafe** (✆ **415/956-2014;** www.hardrock.com), fill in the cracks. If you arrive by car, park at a meter on adjacent streets or across from the wharf between Taylor and Jones streets. But be advised, the parking garage there is exorbitant. It's cheaper—and more fun—to take the F-Market streetcar down the Embarcadero.

Beach St. and The Embarcadero. ✆ **415/705-5500.** www.pier39.com. Hours vary by season; 10am–10pm for shops and attractions, closing as early at 7pm in mid-winter; 11:30am–11pm for restaurants.

Ripley's Believe It or Not **Ages 8 and up.** What this has to do with Fisherman's Wharf I'll never know, but if it's raining and you're desperate to fill an hour with the kids and you just happen to be out front, what the heck. If you're not familiar with the Ripley's franchise, it's all about weird people and things that are supposed to be too strange to be believed unless you "see" them with your own eyes. Exhibits cover stories such as the World's Tallest Man, the World's Shortest Man (featuring a wax model of Tom Thumb), a giant hairball, and many more esoteric oddities. (***Note:*** Be sure to check the Ripley's website for discounts up to $3 off for adults, $1.50 for kids.)

175 Jefferson St. ✆ **415/202-9850.** www.ripleysf.com. Admission $15 ages 13 and up, $9 kids 5–12, children under 5 free. Discounts for seniors and AAA members. Sun–Thurs 10am–10pm; Fri–Sat 10am–midnight; summer Sun–Thurs 9am–11pm; Fri–Sat 9am–midnight.

SS Jeremiah O'Brien ★ **Ages 5 and up.** During World War II, the U.S. ramped up production of warships, revolutionizing building methods by prefabricating several parts at a time in various shipyards. The new technique allowed the U.S. to make ships faster than the Germans could sink them. One such "Liberty Ship" was the *O'Brien,* which participated in both the 1944 D-Day invasion and the anniversary celebrations 50 years later. It's worth checking out.

Pier 45. ✆ **415/544-0100.** www.ssjeremiahobrien.org. Admission $8 adults, $5 seniors, $4 kids 6–14, free military w/ID and children under 6, $20 for family w/2 adults and up to 4 kids under 18. Daily 9am–4pm.

USS Pampanito ★ **Ages 5 and up.** History buffs and children get a thrill from touring this submarine, which saw active duty during World War II and helped save 73 British and Australian prisoners-of-war. Quarters are cramped, of course, but that's the point, right? A 20-minute self-guided audio tour, narrated by former crewmembers, is included in the admission price. Our older two kids found it fascinating, as did we adults.

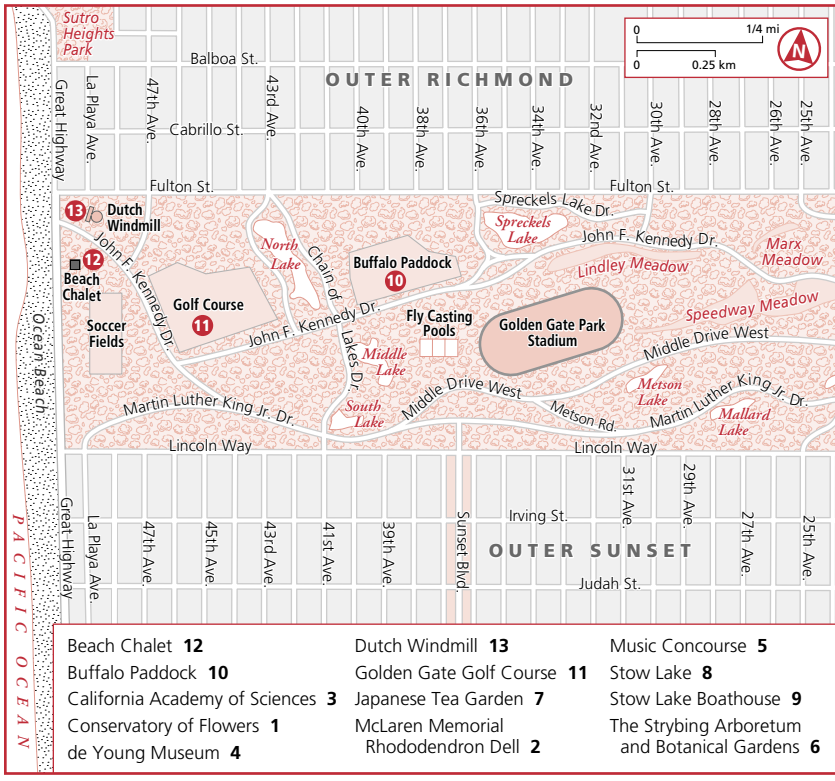
Pier 45. ✆ **415/775-1943.** www.maritime.org. Admission $9 adults, $5 seniors 62 and up, $3 children 6–12, active military w/ID $4, free children under 6. The $20 family pass for 2 adults and up to 4 children under 18 includes admission to the ships at the Hyde St. Pier (reviewed above). Sun–Thurs 9am–6pm, Fri–Sat 9am–8pm; summer (late May–mid-Oct) Thurs–Tues 9am–8pm, Wed 9am–6pm.

Wax Museum **Ages 8 and up.** This recently renovated complex is a pale imitation of Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum in London, and that goes for the figures, too. You'll see tackily dressed, wan celebrities and historical figures grouped by type (U.S. presidents, for instance) or by business (athletes). The Chamber of Horrors is horribly uninspired. Discount coupons are available from hotel concierges, inside the free Bay City Guides in street racks on Jefferson Street, and online at the museum's website.

145 Jefferson St. ✆ **800/439-4305.** www.waxmuseum.com. Admission $13 adults, $9.95 seniors 55 and up and youth 12–17, $6.95 children 6–11, free children 5 and under. Winter daily 9am–9pm; summer daily 9am–11pm.

GOLDEN GATE PARK ★★★

In the 1860s, San Francisco set aside 1,017 acres of windswept sand dunes to create what is now one of the country's greatest city parks. The honors for that achievement go to John McLaren, park superintendent from 1890 to 1943, who developed a new strain of grass to hold the sandy soil, built windmills to pump water for irrigation, and spent 40



Beach Chalet **12**
Buffalo Paddock **10**
California Academy of Sciences **3**
Conservatory of Flowers **1**
de Young Museum **4**
Dutch Windmill **13**
Golden Gate Golf Course **11**
Japanese Tea Garden **7**
McLaren Memorial Rhododendron Dell **2**
Music Concourse **5**
Stow Lake **8**
Stow Lake Boathouse **9**
The Strybing Arboretum and Botanical Gardens **6**

years constructing a natural wall to prevent erosion from the ocean—transforming the barren land into a lush urban retreat. San Franciscans can be spotted doing just about everything at the park from playing soccer to sailing model yachts to throwing family reunions. On Sundays, when John F. Kennedy Drive is closed to street traffic, bicyclists ride with impunity and in-line skaters converge for dance parties.

The once-named "Children's Playground," built in 1887, was the first public kids' playground in the U.S. Reopened after a major renovation in May 2007 under the new name **Koret Children's Quarter,** it's among the coolest playgrounds you could take your kids to. Next door, the beautifully restored 1912 carousel next to it will be open Saturdays and Sundays from 10am to 5pm. Another entrance at 9th Avenue on Lincoln Way brings you to the **Strybing Arboretum** and the **Japanese Tea Garden.**

Joggers and parents pushing baby strollers make regular use of the path around man-made **Stow Lake.** It's the perfect place to enjoy a sunny day by renting a paddleboat and having a picnic. The **Boathouse** (✆ **415/752-0347**) also rents bikes and in-line skates by the hour, half-day, and full day. If you aren't driving, it's a bit of a walk to the Boathouse, which is west of the Japanese Tea Garden on Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive. It's open daily from 10am to 4pm.

The N-Judah Muni Metro streetcar drops you off on 9th A venue and J udah Street; from there it is a 3-block walk to the park. Numerous bus lines drive close to or into the park, including the no. 44-O'Shaughnessy, which you can catch on 9th Avenue, the no. 21-Hayes, no. 71-Haight-Noriega, or the no. 5-Fulton. You can also transfer to the no . 44-O'Shaughnessy from the no. 38-Geary bus on 6th Avenue.

The Conservatory of Flowers ★★ **Ages 6 and up.** This postcard-perfect glass and wood greenhouse is the oldest existing public conser vatory in the Western hemisphere. Prefabricated in Ireland in 1875 and erected in the park around 1878, the structure lost 40% of its glass tiles in 1995 during a 100-mile-an-hour windstorm that ripped through the park. The conservatory reopened in 2003 after a multi-y ear, $25-million restoration that r elied ex clusively on priv ate funds. The car eful r enovation r escued a centur y-old tropical philodendron from the wreckage. In addition to the philodendr on, visitors will find rare orchids, aquatic and tr opical plants, and tr ees from five continents. Although the Conser vatory has mor e than 17,000 (!) differ ent species of plants, ther e's a good chance your children will be most fascinated b y the carnivorous flora, with lid-like tops and some surprisingly large " pitchers" in which they digest their pr ey. In fr ont of the

conservatory is a colorful display of traditional flowers and, to the right, the captivating Dahlia Garden.

Just off John F. Kennedy Dr., near the Stanyan St. entrance. ✆ **415/666-7001.** www.conservatoryofflowers.org. $5 adults; $3 for youths 12–17, seniors, and students w/ID; $1.50 children 5–11, free children under 5. Open Tues–Sun 9am–5pm (last visitor must enter by 4:30pm.)

Japanese Tea Garden ★★ **All ages.** Japanese landscape architect Makoto Hagiwara designed a small Japanese-style garden for the 1894 World's Fair, which later expanded to its current 5-acre size. Visitors walk along windy pathways, stepping stones, and bridges framed by koi ponds, Japanese maples, cedars, cherry trees, and bonsai. Highlights include a 1790 bronze Buddha, a Shinto wooden pagoda, and a Zen Garden. Young children find this small, intimate minipark particularly memorable, in part for the steeply arched Drum Bridge—which doubles as an excellent climbing structure. You'll need less than an hour to take it all in, but if you want to extend your experience, visit the teahouse for tea and snacks. Just steer clear of the junky gift shop, lest you lose the sense of serenity gained while strolling through these lovely grounds.

The garden entrance is to the left of the de Young Museum construction site. ✆ **415/752-4227.** Admission $5 adults, $3 seniors and children 6–12, $1.50 children 5–11, free children 4 and under; free entrance Mon, Wed, Fri btw. 9–10am. Open 9am–4:45pm; summer 9am–6pm.

The Strybing Arboretum and Botanical Gardens **All ages.** With more than 6,000 species of well-tended plants, flowering trees, and theme gardens, you'll find this to be a splendid oasis. It is exceptionally lovely in late winter when the rhododendrons blossom and wild iris poke up in corners, and there is no more peaceful a place when the skies are drizzling. Docents give free tours daily at 1:30pm and weekends at 10:30am, departing from the bookstore. Children can run at will on the vast lawn not far past the entrance, and at the very end of the arboretum there's a children's teaching garden with vegetables, herbs, fruit, and sunflowers in season.

9th Ave. at Lincoln Way, left of the tour bus parking lot by the Music Concourse. ✆ **415/661-1316.** www.sfbotanicalgarden.org. Free admission. Mon–Fri 8am–4:30pm; Sat–Sun 10am–5pm.

2 MUSEUMS FOR EVERYONE

Asian Art Museum ★★★ **Ages 8 and up.** After 35 years in Golden Gate Park, the Asian moved in 2003 to new quarters near City Hall. The museum owns one of the largest collections of Asian art in the Western world, covering 6,000 years and encompassing cultures throughout Asia. The textiles are amazing examples of design and handiwork; the Chinese paintings are often more accessible than modern works and are achingly beautiful. My kids were enthralled with the intricate Indonesian puppets and the model Japanese home. The building itself is another reason to visit: Gae Aulenti, the Milanese architect who renovated the d'Orsay train station in Paris into the intriguing Musée d'Orsay, renovated the interior of the 1917 Beaux Arts former Main Library, creating 37,500 square feet of exhibition space.

The museum offers two "Family Fest" events per year, with specific activities geared toward families. Sundays at 1pm the museums storytellers entertain children with Asian myths and folktales. Also on those first Saturdays, as well as every Sunday, the museum hosts a storytelling time for kids at 1pm. The first Sunday of the month is "Target Sunday"

SF Muni launches the Culture Bus!

In September 2008, SFMuni launched a convenient way to get to most of the city's major museums and cultural institutions. The 74X CultureBus (www.sfculturebus.org) takes 30 minutes to get from SoMa, home to Yerba Buena Gardens and its myriad galleries, to Golden Gate Park, where you'll find the de Young Museum, California Academy of Sciences, Japanese Tea Garden, and so on. It also stops at the Civic Center along the way. Tickets offer on-off privileges all day and are $7 adults; $5 seniors, kids 5–17, and disabled; free children 4 and under. If you have a Citypass or other Muni pass, you just pay $3. Buses run every 20 minutes from 8:40am to 5:50pm.

and usually features a demonstration and kids' activity. Admission is free, so be sure to arrive early, as it gets crowded. The museum has an elegant gift shop and an inviting cafe offering varied Asian specialties such as noodle soups, salmon misoyaki, or Tibetan lamb stew (simple salads and sandwiches can also be had).

200 Larkin St. (at Fulton St.). ✆ **415/581-3500.** www.asianart.org. Admission $12 adults, $8 seniors, $7 youth 13–17, free for children 12 and under; $5 for all Thurs after 5pm (except kids 12 and under, who are free). Free first Tues of the month. Discount for same-day Muni riders. Tues–Sun 10am–5pm, Thurs until 9pm. Muni: Any streetcar to Civic Center; 5, 21, 19, 74X bus.

Bay Area Discovery Museum ★★★ **Kids up to 10.** Ostensibly a museum for children, this indoor/outdoor play and discovery space is fun for grown-ups as well. Tucked into a wooded national park at the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge, with lovely views of the San Francisco skyline, the location alone makes it an excellent place to hang out and take in the scenery.

Out-of-towners will appreciate the Lookout Cove exhibit, a 2 1/2-acre outdoor space dedicated to the Bay Area's history, geography, and ecology. Kids can don pint-sized construction helmets and "build" a smaller scale version of the Golden Gate Bridge, wade through tide pools into a sea cave (real tide pools and caves are found just north of San Francisco), search for treasure inside a sunken ship modeled after an actual 16th-century Manila galleon still at the bottom of nearby Drake's Bay, study artists' sculptures of local animals, and hike along the site's hillside perimeter. While kids play, parents can hang back and take in the view or read the detailed signs and photographs that provide rich detail about the San Francisco Bay's past and present.

In case the weather disappoints, the museum has several indoor play areas—including a tot spot, art area, and the San Francisco Bay Room featuring a life-sized fishing boat—although they're mostly geared to very young kids. You could easily spend a couple of hours here, so pick up lunch at the on-site cafe and grab a picnic table outside. Even though not strictly in San Francisco, the museum is too good to leave for a side trip. ***Note:*** If you take the bus, you'll have a 10- to 15-minute walk from the bus stop to the museum.

Fort Baker, 577 McReynolds Rd., Sausalito. ✆ **415/339-3900.** www.baykidsmuseum.org. Admission $10 adults, $8 seniors and children 1 and older, children under 1 free. $1 AAA discount. Tues–Fri 9am–4pm; Sat–Sun 10am–5pm. Closed Mon., except when noted. Muni: Weekends only 76 bus to Alexander Road/East Road exit; walk down East Road toward Fort Baker.

Cable Car Museum **All ages.** It won't take long to peer down at the machinery that allows the cable cars to travel up and down the city's hills, but this seemingly simple piece of engineering is very cool. The car barn displays inventor Hallidie's original model from 1873, and there's a short video explaining how the cable cars work, plus a gift shop for those must-have mini cable cars.

1201 Mason St. (at Washington St.). ✆ **415/474-1887.** www.cablecarmuseum.com. Free admission. Daily 10am–5pm, until 6pm Apr 1–Sep 30. Closed New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Muni: Powell-Mason or Powell-Hyde cable car.

California Academy of Sciences ★★★ **All ages.** The greenest museum in the world opened in its spectacular new home in Golden Gate Park in September 2008. Designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano and awarded platinum certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, the Academy of Sciences building is not merely ecological in its use of natural resources; its very composition evokes a new relationship with the natural world. Gone are the imposing stone walls of old, replaced by special glass that reduces both heat absorption and the need for artificial lighting, while also connecting the building more closely to the outside surroundings. Ethereal, 36-foot-tall columns made of recycled steel hold up a living roof, a gently undulating marvel covered in 1.7 million verdant plants, which in turn attract hummingbirds, bumblebees, butterflies, and other animal life.

While you savor the building's remarkable architecture, your kids will be delighted by the Academy's many offerings. First off, get tickets to a Planetarium show, as these sell out quickly. Then take a stroll through the neo-classical African Hall, which was partially recreated from the old building, with its almost quaint dioramas of African animals. At the end of the hall you'll see the African penguin colony; the birds are fed daily at 10:30am and 3:30pm. Next wind your way up four flights of circular stairs through the Rainforests of the World exhibit, with glimpses of Borneo's bat caves, Madagascar's geckos, and Costa Rica's tropical butterflies, before heading down into the flooded Amazonian rainforest. Now pop up to the roof for a good look at it before catching your Planetarium show. After the film, take your time visiting the wonders of the museum's Steinhart Aquarium, including the world's deepest living coral reef display. Scuba divers feed the fish here daily at 11am and 2pm.

Curious kids should also visit the Naturalist Center, where experts and resources are available to answer any other questions they may have. The Academy has surprisingly few interactive exhibits; the touch pools with starfish and other sea creatures are a small exception. No matter. It's such a lovely place and the exhibits so well designed that your kids are sure to enjoy it as much as you.

55 Music Concourse Dr. (in Golden Gate Park btw. John F. Kennedy and South drives). ✆ **415/379-8000.** www.calacademy.org. Admission $25 adults; $20 seniors, children 12–17, and students; $14 children 7–11; $3 kids 6 and under; free for all the 3rd Wed of the month. $3 discount with public transportation ticket. Planetarium shows every half-hour 11:30am–4:30pm. Mon–Sat 9:30am–5pm, Sun 11am–5pm. Muni: 74X CultureBus or N-Judah streetcar to 9th Ave., then walk north on 9th Ave. into the park; no. 44-O'Shaughnessy bus to Concourse Dr.

California Palace of the Legion of Honor ★★ **Ages 3 and up.** Constructed as a memorial to California's soldiers lost in World War I and opened to the public on Armistice Day in 1924, this neoclassical structure is a replica of the Legion of Honor Palace in Paris. The exquisite setting inside Lincoln Park alone makes it worth a visit. Take in the expansive lawn, Monterey cypress trees, and breathtaking western vista of the Golden Gate Bridge. The museum's fine collection spans 4,000 years and includes

European paintings (by Monet and Rembrandt, among others), drawings, decorative arts, and one of the world's best collections of Rodin's sculptures, including an original cast of *The Thinker.* International tapestries, print, and drawings are also on display.

The cafe offers healthy and flavorful snack and lunch items in a delightful indoor/outdoor setting; it is only accessible through the museum. If you can, come on a weekend afternoon to catch the 4pm organ concert. The museum's impressive 1924 Skinner pipe organ has 4,500 pipes varying in size from a half-inch to 32 feet, all hidden behind canvas painted to look like marble.

Clement St. and 34th Ave. ✆ **415/750-3600.** www.famsf.org/legion. Admission $10 adults, $7 seniors, $6 youth 13–17. Free children 12 and under, free to all 1st Tues of the month. Tues–Sun 9:30am–5:15pm; Friday 9:30am–8:45pm. Organ concerts Sat and Sun at 4pm. Muni: no. 38-Geary to 33rd Ave., then transfer to the no. 18-46th Ave.

Cartoon Art Museum **Ages 6 and up.** Cartoons are taken seriously in these parts. Exhibits in the museum's five galleries a half-block from Yerba Buena Center trace the history of cartoon art from political jabs to underground comics. Temporary shows highlight individual artists, such as Bill Watterson and Edward Gorey, and specific forms, such as television cartoon animation. Most of the comic strips are geared to adults. Given the inviting name of the museum, kids may be disappointed. Certainly they'll appreciate the collection of Disney cels and backgrounds that were actually used to make classics such as *Fantasia* and *Snow White,* but you could be better off just renting a Disney movie. Contact the museum for information on cartooning classes and 1-day workshops for kids.

655 Mission St. ✆ **415/227-8666.** www.cartoonart.org. Admission $6 adults, $4 students/seniors, $2 kids 6–12, free children 5 and under. Tues–Sun 11am–5pm. First Tues of the month is "pay what you wish" day. Closed on Mon and major holidays. Muni: Any streetcar to Montgomery St.; 14, 30, 45, 74X bus.

The Contemporary Jewish Museum **Ages 8 and up.** This museum has been designed as an evolving space welcoming people of all backgrounds to come together to experience art, music, film literature, and other expressions of the Jewish spirit and imagination. Among recent exhibits was the thought-provoking "Jewish Identity Project: New American Photography," which featured the work of 13 artists, not all of them Jewish, who profiled different Jewish communities throughout the U.S.—and shattered some stereotypes along the way. The museum is scheduled to move in 2008 to a dynamic new space in SoMa designed by architect Daniel Libeskind.

121 Steuart St. (btw. Mission and Howard sts.). 736 Mission St. (btw. 3rd and 4th sts.) ✆ **415/344-8800.** www.thecjm.org. Fri–Tues 11am–5:30pm, Thurs 1–8:30pm. Closed Wed, Jewish holidays, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and New Year's Day (open limited hours on Christmas). Admission $10 adults, $8 students and seniors, free for kids 12 and under. Free admission 3rd Mon of every month. $5 Thurs after 5pm Muni: F-Market streetcar; 14, 30, 45, 74X bus.

de Young Museum ★★★ **Ages 5 and up.** Designed by the Swiss architecture firm Herzog & de Meuron, the de Young raised eyebrows when its gleaming copper facade, with a 144-foot-tall tower soaring well above the forest canopy, first became visible. Residents complained that the imposing building had no place in a park, despite assurances from the architects that the copper—perforated and textured to resemble light streaming through trees—would eventually turn green, blending more seamlessly into the surroundings. That the copper has indeed begun to take on a subtle green sheen now seems irrelevant. The museum has won locals over since its 2005 opening.

Among the museum's many assets is, in fact, its architecture. Once inside, elements of light and nature weave together compellingly with unexpected angles and modern materials such as exposed concrete and glass. And while the museum's tower does soar beyond

the treetops, it also affords a terrific view all the way to the Marin Headlands. That view is accessible to any visitor, free of charge. That complimentary access is another feature that sets the de Young apart: While visitors must pay an entrance fee to visit the museum galleries, vast swaths of common space are open to everyone. On a stroll through the park, you can step into the de Young, take in the impressive painting by Gerhard Richter that watches over the main lobby, head to the tower room and contemplate ethereal wire creations by renowned local sculptor Ruth Asawa, pop up to the top floor to take in the priceless view, and then walk out to the sculpture garden to appreciate works by such well-known artists as Joan Miro and Henry Moore—all for free. In the garden, enter the *Three Gems* structure by James Turrell: If your kids stand in the middle of the unusual orb and talk, they'll feel their voices vibrate.

While you can enjoy so much for free, I encourage you to pay the entrance fee—which, since kids 12 and under are free, is very reasonable—as the de Young houses a first-rate collection of American art and one of the world's most formidable collections of art from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. (In the Oceania area, my daughters especially liked the Indonesian prayer boards, which look a lot like surfboards.) Every Saturday, from 10:30am to noon, museum docents lead tours of current exhibitions, followed by studio workshops taught by professional artist-teachers, which are appropriate for children ages 3½ to 12, although children under age 8 must be accompanied by an adult. (This program is also available from 1:30–3pm for museum members.) Except in midwinter, the museum is open late on Friday nights and offers special activities such as live music, dance, poetry, lectures, and art-making classes for the kids (regular admission rates apply). The de Young also has a first-rate cafe and an irresistible gift shop, both of which are accessible free of charge.

75 Tea Garden Dr. ✆ **415/750-3600.** www.famsf.org/deyoung. Admission $10 adults, $7 seniors, $6 youth 13–17, free children 12 and under. Admission tickets to the de Young may be used on the same day for free admission to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor. Free to all the 1st Tues of the month. Tues–Sun 9:30am–5:15pm (Fri open until 8:45pm). Muni: 74X CultureBus or N-Judah streetcar to 9th Ave., then walk north on 9th Ave. into the park; no. 44-O'Shaughnessy bus to Concourse Dr.

Mission Dolores **Ages 6 and up.** Visitors from other parts of California, especially those with middle school kids about to study its history, should not miss touring this small, old mission, the sixth of 21 California missions built by Native Americans under the rule of Franciscan missionaries. Formerly known as Mission San Francisco de Asis, this 1795 structure has the honor of being the oldest building in San Francisco, having survived earthquakes, fires, and a stint in the 1840s as a gambling den. Of note is the graveyard where Hitchcock filmed scenes for *Vertigo.* The self-guided audio tour takes 40 minutes.

3371 16th St. (at Dolores St.). ✆ **415/621-8203.** www.missiondolores.org. Admission $5 adults, $3 seniors and children 7–17, free children 6 and under. Audio tour $5. Daily 9am–4pm. Good Friday 9am–noon. Closed Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas. Muni: J-Church streetcar to 16th St.; walk 1 block east.

Museum of the African Diaspora ★ **Ages 6 and up.** Opened in 2006, this colorfully and creatively arranged museum explores the art, culture, and history of the people of African descent across the globe. Before stepping inside, head across the street to appreciate the three-story-tall image of an intense, beautiful young girl taken by photographer Chester Higgins, Jr. As you head up the stairs inside the museum, you'll see that her image is actually composed of thousands of photographs of members of the African diaspora. While some of the museum's exhibits—such as the empty room filled only with

I Spy with My Little Eyes—SFMOMA

This quiz begins as you arrive at the front of the museum. Keep score to see how much you see. (And, remember, don't touch any of the art!)

1. How many striped pillars are there in the front of the museum? (Score 1 point)
2. There are two rainbow-colored paintings in the atrium as you enter the museum. What is the main difference between them? (Score 1 point)
3. Can you find a painting of a woman with a colorful hat? (Hint: There are at least 2. Score 2 points for each painting you find.)
4. Find a painting of a musical instrument. (Hint: There are at least 2. Score 1 point for each one you find.)
5. Find paintings with two or more rectangles. (Hint: There are at least 3. Score 1 point for each one you find.)
6. Find a shiny sculpture. (Score 3 points.)
7. Find a sculpture with rounded edges and one with rough edges. (Score 2 points for each.)
8. Find a painting with silver in it. (Score 3 points.)
9. Find a painting with circles in it. (Score 2 points.)
10. Go to the outdoor sculpture terrace with an adult. Look out into the city. How many flags can you see on the building tops? (Score 1 point.)
11. On the fifth floor, find the turret bridge and walk across it to the other side. Take an adult! (Score 2 points.)
12. Find a painting or sculpture you really like. Tell your mom or dad what you like about it. See if there's a post card with it pictured in the gift shop. (Score 5 points if your parent buys you the postcard.)

Answers:

1) 4 2) The main difference is the curved versus the straight lines 10) 4.

Add up your points. If your score was:

20 points or more: Your powers of observation are very good.

15 to 20 points: You don't need glasses.

Less than 15 points: Start over (just kidding).

the narration of former slaves—may be too esoteric for young kids, two exhibits will be sure to draw them in. One features a man, woman, and child composed of continuously changing faces and clothing. The other is an interactive area where kids can listen to different types of African-influenced music, from ragtime and jazz to salsa and samba, and listen to different instruments representing each musical style. The tiny gift shop includes interesting collectibles like tiny, beaded African dolls.

685 Mission St. (at Third St.). ✆ **415/358-7200.** www.moadsf.org. Admission $10 adults, $5 students w/ ID and seniors 62 and up, free kids 12 and under. Mon, Wed–Sat 11am–6pm; Sun noon–5pm. Closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Muni: Any streetcar to Montgomery St.; 14, 30, 45, 74X bus.

San Francisco Fire Department Museum **Ages 4 and up.** This one-room museum next to a firehouse features display cases filled with artifacts tracing the history of San Francisco's fire departments, from volunteer firefighters to the beginnings of the professional squads of today. The floor display of antique equipment, including two steam engines, shows how far we've come.

655 Presidio Ave. (btw. Bush and Pine sts.). ✆ **415/558-3546** (recorded info) or 415/563-4630 (during open hours). www.sffiremuseum.org. Free admission. Thurs–Sun 1–4pm. Muni: no. 43-Masonic, no. 4-Sutter, or no. 2-Clement bus.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) ★★★ **All ages.** The first museum on the West Coast devoted solely to post-turn-of-the-20th-century art, the SFMOMA took up residence in 1995 in its current home designed by Swiss architect Mario Botta. The impressive brick facade, accentuated by a black and white tower, opens to a sleek atrium and a set of black and gray stone stairs leading up the museum's four stories. The permanent collection includes more than 26,000 works, including 5,000 paintings by the likes of Henri Matisse, Piet Mondrian, Jackson Pollock, and Robert Rauschenberg. Other artists represented include Diego Rivera, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Paul Klee. The first museum to recognize photography as a major art form, the SFMOMA also has more than 9,000 photographs from such notables as Ansel Adams and Henri Cartier-Bresson. Although not enough of these wonderful art pieces are on view at any one time, the museum also hosts excellent temporary displays. Perhaps because of the colorful and arresting nature of much contemporary art, we've always found something here to hold the attention of even our very young daughters.

On the third Sunday of the month from noon to 3pm, children up to 10 years old are invited to create some artwork of their own in the Family Studio of the **Koret Education Center.** This activity is free with museum admission, and prior registration isn't necessary. Also, for 1 day in June and October, Family Day offers reduced admission rates to the museum and a full day of activities and performances geared toward kids under 10. On other days of the week, the center offers educational art videos, activities for kids, and art books geared for children (Koret Center, ✆ **415/538-4693;** closes 15 min. before the rest of the museum).

The **Caffè Museo,** offering grilled sandwiches, salads, and soups, is a great place to grab lunch, although it's packed on weekends. The **Museum Store** is one of the better gift shops in town, carrying unique educational toys for very young children. Museum admission is not required to enter the cafe or gift shop.

151 3rd St. (2 blocks south of Market St. btw. Mission and Howard sts.). ✆ **415/357-4000.** www.sfmoma.org. Admission $13 adults, $8 seniors, $7 students w/ID, free for kids 12 and under. Half-price Thurs 6–8:45pm. Free to all 1st Tues of the month. Discounts for groups over 10 people. Thurs 11am–8:45pm; Fri–Tues 11am–5:45pm. Summer: Mon–Tues and Fri 10am–5:45pm; Sat–Sun 10am–7:45pm; Thurs 10am–8:45pm. Closed Wed and major holidays. Muni: Take any streetcar to the Montgomery St. Station; 14, 30, 45, 74X bus.

3 THE BEST VIEWS

People like views. That much is clear from the wrangling that goes on to get a table with a view in restaurants or the extra tariff imposed on a room with a view, not to mention a home with a view. San Francisco is one major view, owing to all those hills. Following are some of the best.

Alamo Square ★ From this vantage point you will see the famous restored Victorian residences of "Postcard Row," with the downtown skyline as a stunning backdrop. The most common house type in many San Francisco neighborhoods, Victorian homes dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s meshed a variety of styles but had in common wooden frames and decorative facades. The most elaborate and colorful of these earned the nickname "Painted Ladies." Since your kids will see these houses in calendars and postcards as long as they live, you may want to show them the real thing. Just note that Alamo Square Park is popular with dog owners, some of whom do not leash their canine companions.

Btw. Steiner, Scott, Hayes, and Fulton sts. Muni: no. 21-Hayes bus from Market St. drops passengers off at the crest of the park.

Beach Chalet Restaurant The waves along Ocean Beach, at the end of Golden Gate Park on the Great Highway, are at times soothing and at times violent enough to discourage beachcombing. In either case, you'll be as comfy as a babe in his crib if you get a table upstairs in the Beach Chalet restaurant, which overlooks the Pacific across the Great Highway. The building was designed by Willis Polk, and the first-floor visitor center is adorned by murals painted in the 1930s by the same artist who painted the frescoes at Coit Tower. The food is decent, but the beer is better, so you could make this a rest stop after visiting the zoo or Golden Gate Park. (Another option is having a drink here before heading downstairs for a meal at the Park Chalet, which has the same owners but serves better fare.) The waves crashing along the coast are mesmerizing any time of day, but come at sunset if you can.

1000 Great Hwy. (btw. Lincoln Way and Fulton St.). ✆ **415/386-8439.** www.beachchalet.com. Sun–Thurs 9am–10pm; Fri–Sat 9am–11pm. Muni: No. 18-46th Ave. bus, N-Judah streetcar to the end; walk 3 blocks north toward the park.

Cliff House This historic building on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean reopened in late 2004 after a $19-million restoration. Views are awe-inspiring. See the Cliff House Bistro write-up on p. 149 for a full review.

1090 Point Lobos (Geary St., west of 48th Ave.). ✆ **415/386-3330.** Daily 9am–9pm. Muni: No. 38-Geary bus to 48th Ave., then walk 1 block or transfer to 18 bus.

Coit Tower ★ Visible from almost any spot on the Embarcadero, this 210-foot landmark was erected in 1933 through the generosity of local character Lillie Hitchcock Coit—who bequeathed $125,000 to erect a monument that would add beauty to the city. In addition to the panoramic vista at the top of the tower, the inside also contains a collection of impressive murals. Commissioned in the New Deal era, their pro-worker stance caused quite a stir at the time. Reflecting the style of Diego Rivera, under whom many of the artists had studied, the murals' two-dimensional and cartoonlike qualities may be appealing to your kids. If not, move quickly to the elevator for a ride to the top, which will be sure to spark their interest.

Atop Telegraph Hill. ✆ **415/362-0808.** Free viewing of murals; ride $5 adults, $3 seniors, $1.50 children 5–11, under 5 free. Daily 10am–6:30pm. Muni: No. 39-Coit bus from Washington Sq. Park in North Beach, or walk from Lombard St. where it meets Telegraph Hill Blvd. (2 blocks east of Stockton St.).

de Young Museum Tower From here you'll get one of the best free views in town. This 144-foot-tall tower is open to all visitors, even if they haven't paid to enter the museum. You'll see fabulous views of northwestern San Francisco, from where you can see Golden Gate Park, the impressively tall Presidio, Lincoln Park, even the Pacific Ocean

Fun Facts **Stump the Tour Guide**

If you hear that Coit Tower was built as a memorial to the city's firemen, go ahead and set the record straight. Although the Tower was built with funds bequeathed by Lillie Hitchcock Coit, whose lifelong passion for firefighters helped to make her a legend in her own time, her will stipulated only that she wished to beautify the city she loved. The tower is not meant to resemble a fire hose nozzle, by the way. It's just a fluted column.

So, where is the memorial to volunteer firemen paid for by Lillie Hitchcock Coit? It's in Washington Square Park.

and the Marin Headlands beyond. Plus, the tower houses a massive aerial map of San Francisco, so detailed that you can probably work out which building on it is your hotel. The map has proved so popular that the museum put a gift shop in the tower so visitors could take home their own poster-sized version of it.

75 Tea Garden Dr. ✆ **415/750-3600.** www.sfgate.com/deyoung. Free admission. Tues–Sun 9:30am–5pm (open Fri until 8:45pm). Muni: N-Judah streetcar to 9th Ave., then walk north on 9th Ave. into the park; no. 44-O'Shaughnessy bus to Concourse Dr.; 74X bus.

Dolores Park The city and bay views over this stretch of green on a clear day are unforgettable. After soaking in the scenery and taking a stroll through the park, walk 2 blocks north on Dolores Street until you reach **Mission Dolores** (reviewed earlier in this chapter) at 16th and Dolores streets.

The park is bounded by 18th, 20th, Church, and Dolores sts. Muni: From any Muni Metro station (the Powell St. Station being the closest to Union Sq.) take the J-Church toward Daly City. Exit on 20th and Church sts., above Dolores Park.

Lincoln Park One of the prettiest golf courses in creation, Lincoln Park is situated around the Palace of the Legion of Honor and above the entrance to the San Francisco Bay at Land's End. Standing in front of the museum, you can see in the distance a snippet of downtown framed within the green branches of fir trees. From here, walk west down the street. You'll be stunned by a postcard-perfect view of the Golden Gate Bridge from a unique perspective, as if you're entering the bay. Take a seat on one of the benches thoughtfully placed along the street so you can survey the vista in comfort.

The park is located at the northwest corner of the city. Muni: No. 18-46th Ave. bus to the Palace of the Legion of Honor parking lot.

Top of the Mark In 1939, the top floor of the Mark Hopkins InterContinental was converted into a glass-walled lounge with 360-degree city views. During World War II, wives and girlfriends of Pacific-bound servicemen watched their loved ones' ships sail eastward below the Golden Gate Bridge from the windows of the northwest corner—soon nicknamed "Weepers' Corner." Now a restaurant serving a pricey buffet breakfast and lunch Monday to Saturday, an extended champagne brunch on Sundays, and prix-fixe dinners Friday and Saturday, as well cocktails and light snacks most evenings, the Top sees plenty of visitors just popping up for the panoramic view. ***Note:*** After 8pm the Top requests "smart casual" attire and does not permit minors.

1 Nob Hill (at California and Mason sts.). ✆ **415/616-6916.** www.topofthemark.com. Hours of operation vary, but you can probably pop up to espy the view anytime. Sun 10am–2pm, Mon–Sat 6:30am–2:30pm; Fri–Sat 6:30am–1am. Muni: Any cable car to Powell and California sts., then walk 1 block west to California and Mason sts.

Twin Peaks On a clear day you really can see forever from what's nearly the tallest hill in pretty much the center of town. The trick is to go when the fog has lifted. Otherwise, it's cold, windy, and gray. Outside of the view, there isn't anything else up on Twin Peaks and it's not really near anything, so before you drive or take the bus up here, be sure it's something everyone wants to do. The bus stops near, but not at, the viewpoint, so some walking will be involved.

Crestline Blvd. Muni: 37-Corbett bus (connect to the bus from the Castro St. Muni station).

4 OUTINGS ON THE BAY

For a more private outing, consider chartering one of the boats through **Saillola.com** (p. 219).

Blue & Gold Fleet **All ages.** One-hour narrated cruises travel to the Golden Gate Bridge, around Alcatraz, and to the Bay Bridge; the soundtrack is prerecorded. The prerecorded soundtrack offers details into San Francisco's maritime past and the history of Alcatraz and other places you'll see along the way.

Pier 41, Fisherman's Wharf. ✆ **415/773-1188.** www.blueandgoldfleet.com. Tours run daily year-round. 1-hour rides $22 adults, $18 seniors and students 12–18, $14 children 5–11, free children 4 and under. Discounts available on the Internet.

Golden Gate Ferry **All ages.** Part of the Golden Gate Transit District, these commuter ferries run back and forth from Larkspur and Sausalito in Marin County to the Ferry Building at the foot of Market Street. It takes about 30 minutes from start to finish, and bikes are allowed on board. Although these boats don't pass under the Golden Gate Bridge, they do travel near Alcatraz and Angel Island. For a low-key, brief, and inexpensive way to get on the water, you can't beat it. If your gang is up to it, you can pedal across the bridge to Sausalito (a 9-mile ride) and then return by ferry.

San Francisco Ferry Building, Market St. at Embarcadero. ✆ **415/923-2000.** www.goldengateferry.org. Tickets 1-way to Sausalito $7.45 adults, $3.70 seniors and children 6–12, free children 5 and under (limit 2 kids per paying adult).

5 CROSSING THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE

As *the* San Francisco landmark, this glorious feat of engineering never fails to elicit admiration from the millions of people who come to gaze at or cross the bridge year after year. Spanning 1¾ miles and soaring hundreds of feet above the water, the Golden Gate Bridge opened in 1937, after 4 years of construction and 11 lives lost. To experience the bridge, you can walk its length, bike it, drive over it, cruise under it, or appreciate it from afar.

BY FOOT Bundle up against the windy conditions, then set out from the **Roundhouse** on the east side of the bridge. It can get pretty noisy, but the views can't be beat. Keep in mind the walk is round-trip; once you get to the other side there's no way back

but to walk. Know your family's limitations before you start out. Strollers are a good idea for anyone small enough to fit. Upon your return, take time to walk underneath the bridge to see the 5-acre garden (open to pedestrians 6am–6pm daily). The no. 28-19th Avenue or the no. 29-Sunset bus deposits you across from the viewing area, right by a parking lot. If you're driving, take 19th Avenue or Lombard Street and pay attention to the sign that indicates when to exit for the paking lot. Otherwise, enjoy your drive across the bridge: there's a $6 toll upon your return to the city.

BY BIKE If your kids are old enough, this may be a better way to go than on foot. Just note the restrictions on which sidewalks are open to bikes—on the weekends from 5am to 6pm;and weekdays from 3:30 to 9pm, use the west sidewalk. At all other times, you'll be sharing the east side walk with pedestrians, who always have the right-of-way. Walk your bike around the towers. For information on bike rentals, see chapter 8.

BY BUS The **no. 76-Marin Headlands** Muni bus picks up from Market and Fremont streets or along Lombard Street and rumbles all the way to the beach at Fort Cronkite in Marin. This route only operates on Sundays and major holidays (✆ **415/673-6864;** www.sfmuni.com).

BY FIRE ENGINE See the "Best Guided Tours for the Family" section below for a unique way to cross the bridge.

6 TAKING A HIKE

Fort Funston ★★ At this Golden Gate National Recreation Area park, trails lead down to the beach where, in good weather, you may see hang gliders. This is also an extremely popular spot for dogs—just about everyone in town with an ocean-loving pooch comes here for a run. The majority of the trails are suitable for kids, especially the Battery Davis and Sunset trails. The old gun emplacements you may see are left over from the era when this was a military site. There are portable toilets around, but no snack bar. The closest restaurants are by the zoo, and they aren't all that inviting.

Skyline Blvd. (off Great Hwy.). ✆ **415/561-4323** (phone for Presidio Visitor's Center, which provides info regarding Fort Funston). www.parksconservancy.org. Muni: No. 18-46th Ave. bus (which stops near the Battery Davis trail), or L-Taraval streetcar to the end of the line and walk ½-mile south on Ocean Beach.

Fort Point ★ Kids get a thrill poking around this fort (ca. 1861) that lies underneath the Golden Gate Bridge at the tip of the peninsula. It was armed with cannons over the course of the Civil War, and early era weapons are on display at the fort. Park rangers give interpretive talks. A 3½-mile walk to Fort Point, beginning at the Hyde Street Pier, passes through the Marina Green and Crissy Field (you can decrease the mileage by starting at Crissy Field).

Long Ave. and Marine Dr. ✆ **415/556-1693** or 415/561-4395. www.nps.gov/fopo. Fri–Sun 10am–5pm. Muni: No. 28-19th Ave. or no. 29-Sunset bus to the Golden Gate Bridge; climb down from the viewing area to a short trail leading to the fort.

Land's End ★★★ The poetic name of this piece of national park becomes easier to comprehend when you stand at the Eagle's Point trail head and look back at the Golden Gate Bridge. It imposingly guards the entrance to the bay and the cities behind it, with nothing but open ocean and the barren hills of the Marin Headlands in front. There is indeed something end-of-the-earth-like about it. The spectacular views accompany you throughout the entire 1.5-mile walk along the northwestern edge of the San Francisco

Peninsula. You'll end at Sutro Park, an 18-acre park atop a bluff overlooking Ocean Beach and Seal Rocks. The cliff-side path narrows at times, so tell your kids to walk, not run.

Eagle's Point (at El Camino del Mar near 32nd St.). ✆ **415/561-4323** (phone for Presidio Visitor's Center, which provides info regarding Land's End). Muni: No. 38-Geary to Point Lobos.

Muir Woods ★★★ Named in honor of Sierra Club founder and conservationist John Muir, 553-acre Muir Woods is what's left locally of the redwood forests that once dominated the Northern California coastline. Although not as immense as Redwood National Forest farther north, this pocket of old-growth redwoods is magnificent, and a range of trails here will suit hikers of all abilities.

Mill Valley. ✆ **415/388-2595.** www.nps.gov/muwo. Daily 8am–sunset. To get there, drive over the Golden Gate Bridge and take the Stinson Beach/Hwy. 1 exit west and follow the signs. Admission $5, free for children 15 and under. Parking is limited so set out early on weekends or go during the week.

The Presidio ★★ On the northern tip of San Francisco lies this former property of the U.S. Army, now part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Numerous trails are contained in the 1,500-acre site, taking you through forests of eucalyptus and pine or along the dramatic coastline. The Ecology Trail starts at the Presidio Officer's Club, where you can pick up trail maps and other information. It takes you along an easy 2-mile hike by the park's largest redwood grove to Inspiration Point, where you'll find a stellar Alcatraz view. The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail can be reached at the Presidio Gate, at Funston and Lake streets. The moderate 3-mile trek passes Mountain Lake and ends at the Golden Gate Bridge. For a shorter route with the kids, head east from Mountain Lake towards Julius Kahn Park. It's an easier walk with a delightful playground at the end as a reward.

Presidio Visitor Center, Presidio Officers' Club, Building 50, Moraga Ave. ✆ **415/561-4323.** www.presidio.gov and www.nps.gov/prsf. Visitors' Center open daily 9am–5pm. Closed major holidays. Muni to Officer's Club: 76-Marin Headlands or 43-Masonic bus, transfer at Lombard and Broderick sts. to 29-Sunset. Muni to Presidio Gate: No. 1-California to Presidio Blvd., walk north on Funston St.

7 BEST GUIDED TOURS FOR THE FAMILY

All About Chinatown! Walking Tours ★ **Ages 8 and up.** Owner Linda Lee has been giving tours in Chinatown for more than 2 decades. Having grown up in Chinatown, she offers an insider's look at this fascinating section of the city. Tours depart from Old St. Mary's Cathedral and last 2 or 3 hours, depending on whether you stay for a dim sum meal at the end. Linda Lee's little company has grown up, and you may find someone else guiding you through Chinatown's crowded alleyways, but fortunately all the tours offered are low-key and flexible. If you have young kids with you, guides will be happy to linger longer at the fortune cookie factory and in the neighborhood playgrounds, while keeping stops at temples to a minimum.

P.O. Box 640145, San Francisco, CA 94164. ✆ **415/982-8839.** www.allaboutchinatown.com. Daily 10am. Walking tours take 2 hr.; 3 hr. w/lunch. Adults walk only $30, w/lunch $45; kids 6–17 walk only $20, w/lunch $35; under 6 free.

City Guides ★ **Ages 10 and up.** There's hardly a section of the city that isn't covered by a City Guides walking tour. Not all are going to be interesting to kids, but log onto the company's website and see if you and they can agree on one of the 1 1/2- to 2-hour

walks scheduled during your trip. This is a superb way to get to know a neighborhood and it's free (although donations are gladly accepted). Reservations aren't even necessary. Just show up at the designated meeting point.

Starting locations vary. ✆ **415/557-4266.** www.sfcityguides.org. Schedules vary.

City-Sightseeing San Francisco ★ **All ages.** The best thing about these tours is the flexibility they offer. It's a "hop-on/hop-off" tour, so you can choose when and where to board the bus. Do you need to jump off to placate a hungry toddler? Did your teen see a hip clothing store she absolutely must check out? No problem. Your ticket is valid for 48 hours after you first use it, so you can continue the tour later that day or even the next. The tours also offer flexibility as to the weather. Don't want to be cooped up inside a bus during sightseeing? Since the tours are on open-top, double-decker buses, just head upstairs! If it's cold or rainy, stay below. The downtown tour stops at major destinations like the Ferry Building, Union Square, Chinatown Gate, and Fisherman's Wharf. The Golden Gate Loop Tour takes you over the Golden Gate Bridge, with accompanying scenery of the Presidio, Pacific Heights, the Palace of Fine Arts along the way.

2800 Leavenworth St., ste. 14 (btw. Beach and Jefferson sts.) ✆ **415/440-8687.** www.city-sightseeing.us. Downtown Loop tours: $27 adults, $16 kids 5–11, under 5 free. Daily 9am–6pm. Downtown tours depart every 15–30 min.; Golden Gate Loop tours: $22 for adults, $17 kids 5–11, under 5 free. Depart daily at 9am, 1:30pm, and 4pm.

Explorer's Club ★ **Ages 5 and up.** Susan Edwards, who spent more than 20 years in child development and education before starting this business, provides two programs under the Explorer's Club name: individualized tours for children and families and a day camp for local kids that runs during the summers and over holiday breaks. Her avid interest in nature and the city's history, combined with gentle enthusiasm and energy, make her an ideal guide/child-care provider. She will plan a one-of-a-kind, half- or full-day outing for a family, or you can choose a tour from her website, all of which include door-to-door pickup and delivery. Tours run the gamut from hiking in Muir Woods to taking an in-depth look at the most famous San Francisco sites. Edwards can also design a unique program just for children over 5—either during the day, if no camps are scheduled, or for a "Kids' Night Out," a nighttime tour that includes dinner and an activity such as seeing a play or toasting marshmallows over a campfire on the beach. If you will need child-care during your San Francisco trip, check the Explorer's Club Camp calendar online to see if Edwards will be out and about the day you need help. If she has room (she takes a maximum of 13 kids out, with another adult supervisor), you and your child will both be in luck.

Mailing address: 693 Dartmouth St., San Francisco, CA 94134. ✆ **415/902-7014.** www.eckidsclub.com. Kids' camp $65 per day. Individual tour prices vary.

Fun Facts Stump the Tour Guide

Question: Where's the most crooked street in San Francisco? ***Answer:*** No, it's not Lombard Street, despite being nicknamed "the crookedest street in the world." Lombard may be the most attractive crooked street anywhere, but the most crooked street in San Francisco is in Potrero Hill. Vermont Street, between 20th and 22nd streets, boasts six turns in 270 feet while Lombard has eight turns in a relatively lengthy 412 feet.

Fun Facts **Stump the Tour Guide**

Nine out of 10—maybe 99 out of 100—locals wouldn't be able to tell you what the official flower of San Francisco is (the dahlia) or the city's official colors (black and gold). Most San Franciscans don't even know that we have official anything, but we even have an official musical instrument—it's the piano-accordion because the very first one produced in the U.S. was built in San Francisco by the Guerrini Company in 1907.

If you don't have a tour guide to quiz, go ask the hotel concierge.

Fire Engine Tours ★ **All ages.** Suspend your dignity to don a ratty woolen cap, fringed knit scarf, and heavy fireman's jacket, then check your seat belt and prepare to be amused on a bumpy 75-minute ride in a 1955 Mack Fire Engine. The big red shiny Mack truck drives over the Golden Gate Bridge into Sausalito and back, and it may just be the most delightful way to cross this bridge. Tour guide Marilyn Katzman only quits talking, singing, and leading cheers when the truck passes through streets that require a modicum of quiet. As you move past various landmarks and sights, Marilyn tosses out historical facts and figures mostly relating to fires and the folks who put them out. The "captain," her husband, Robert, chimes in on cue but mostly keeps the truck heading forward, sometimes at speeds resembling a roller coaster. The fire engine is so much fun, it's regularly rented out for birthday parties as well; my kids still sing the "Big Red Shiny Mack Fire Engine" song they learned at one of those parties.

Outside The Cannery on Beach St. ✆ **415/333-7077.** www.fireenginetours.com. Tickets $45 adults, $35 teens/seniors, $25 kids 12 and under. Tours Wed–Mon unless it rains. Daily tours depart at 1pm; tours added at 11am, 3pm, and 5pm on other days. 75 min. round-trip. Phone for a schedule.

Gray Line Tours **All ages.** Orientation tours by bus can be tedious for kids, most of whom would rather be outside experiencing the city instead of stuck on a bus listening to recorded commentary. When you don't have a lot of time to visit and you want to hit the highlights, however, these tours come in handy. Gray Line is the big kahuna of the industry, with a number of tours around San Francisco and beyond in red double-decker buses, motorized cable cars, and smaller vans. The "Deluxe City Tour" takes you to Twin Peaks, Mission Dolores, the Cliff House, Golden Gate Park, and the Golden Gate Bridge, and there's also an Alcatraz Island option.

Departure points vary by tour. ✆ **415/558-9400.** www.graylinesanfrancisco.com. Tours offered daily year-round. Tickets for the Deluxe City Tour #1 are $41 adults, $39 for seniors 60 and up, $20 kids 5–11, under 5 free.

Local Taste of the City Tours ★★ **Ages 6 and up.** For kids who have a gastronomic bent and an adventuresome palate, this could prove an interesting way to see the city. The brainchild of Tom Medin, a cookbook author and former national park tour guide with an interest in preserving local artisans, these neighborhood walking tours will have your family eating its way through the city. The 3-hour daytime or evening excursions focus on a specific SF neighborhood—North Beach, Fisherman's Wharf, Golden Gate Park, Chinatown, or Haight-Ashbury—taking guests into local bakeries, restaurants, and cafes to sample the food and meet the people who make it. Each tour is followed by the option of a full meal at a local restaurant. (Then again, after the North

Beach tour, with its aromatic Italian bakeries and old-time coffee shops, you may not be able to eat a full meal for the rest of the day.)

Departure points vary by tour. ✆ **888/358-8687** or 415/665-0480. www.sffoodtour.com. Daily at 10am, 2pm, or 6pm. $59 adults, $39 youth 15–18, $15 ages 8–14, under 8 free.

Precita Eyes Mural Art Center ★ **Ages 6 and up.** The Mission is filled with exciting and politically charged murals, but why? And who painted them? For the answers to those questions and a tour of the paintings, sign up with this nonprofit arts center. The 6-block, 2-hour walk, which passes 75 murals, departs from the center Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30pm. A brief slide show on the history of mural art precedes the walk. On Saturdays at 11am, a slightly shorter walk showing 50 murals departs from Café Venice, 3325 24th St. (near the 24th St. BART station), and on Sundays at 11am the shorter tour departs from the Precita Eyes center.

2981 24th St. (near Harrison St.). ✆ **415/285-2287.** www.precitaeyes.org. $12 adults (shorter 11am tour is $10 for adults), $8 students w/ID, $5 seniors, $2 children under 18. Reservations are not necessary unless you have a large group. Mon–Fri 10am–5pm; Sat 10am–4pm; Sun noon–4pm.

The Urban Safari **All ages.** Your kids will be so excited to be riding in a zebra-striped Land Rover, donning their own personal pith helmets, while being driven by a guide in a full safari get-up—that they won't have time to get bored. You can choose from a variety of 4-hour morning tours, focusing on movies, plant life, the bay, or whatever interests your family. You can also opt for 4-hour excursions at midday or in the early evening. The tours are pricey, but the Land Rover will come to pick you up at the location of your choice.

Departure points vary by tour. ✆ **866/MY-SAFARI** (697-2327). www.theurbansafari.com. $100 for the first 4 guests, $75 for each additional person in the group.

7

Neighborhood Strolls

San Francisco is one of the few U.S. cities west of the Mississippi that came to fruition before the advent of the automobile. That pre-car development meant that neighborhoods grew up being pedestrian-friendly. Moreover, the city's quirky geography—at the tip of a peninsula with water on three sides—has prevented the sprawl seen elsewhere. San Francisco is in fact the second most densely populated city in the country.

What this implies for you and yours is that San Francisco is a wonderful place to take in the fresh sea air and savor the neighborhoods on foot. A leisurely stroll in most any quarter is sure to be full of visual treats, from trendy boutique windows to bustling side walk cafes, from painted balconies in Chinatown to unexpected gardens hidden behind century-old Victorian homes, from enchanting views of white sailboats dotting the bay to bright, bold murals in the Mission District.

The hills can be a challenge, of course, but the reward is often another jaw-dropping city vista. A more difficult task may be encouraging your kids to hoof it with you. Strollers will help, except on the staircases of Russian Hill and Telegraph Hill. Fortunately, I've noted playgrounds, coffee shops, and restaurants where you can take frequent rest stops. Just take your time and have fun!

WALKING TOUR 1 CHINATOWN

Start: Dragon Gate.
Finish: Portsmouth Square.
Time: Two hours with shopping breaks; 3 hours with lunch.
Best Time: Weekday mornings.
Worst Time: Saturday when everyone is out.

There's much fun stuff to see here: from colorful, knickknack shops for tourists to exotic grocers frequented by Chinatown locals. A cookie factory, a temple, and historic architecture along the way add to the enjoyment.

Start your tour at the intersection of Bush Street and Grant Avenue, at:

❶ The Dragon's Gate

Chinatown's best-known entryway mirrors traditional gateway arches found in many Chinese villages. The stone lions on either side of the gate are meant to protect against evil spirits. The dragons and fish on the green-tiled pagoda atop the gate signify prosperity. It's tough to take a bad photo here.

Walk north up:

❷ Grant Avenue

This bustling street—festooned with colorful flags throughout the year—is lined with jewelry stores and tourist shops, whose overflowing array of eclectic wares will mesmerize your children. To keep the kids moving along, let them know that many more such shops lie ahead.

Continue up Grant Avenue to Pine Street. Turn right on Pine. Halfway down the block you'll find:

❸ St. Mary's Square

Here you'll find an imposing 12-foot tall, metal statue of Sun Yat-Sen, the first president of the Republic of China. Younger kids can enjoy a playground with fun, colorful structures.

Head across the square to Sacramento Street. On the corner with Grant Avenue is:

❹ Old St. Mary's Church

Built in 1854 by Chinese laborers with Chinese granite, Old St. Mary's was the first structure in California built as a cathedral. The interior was destroyed by fire following the 1906 earthquake and rebuilt 3 years later. Today the church has an active congregation and many outreach programs.

Head across the street and a few steps up Grant Avenue, to 616 Grant Ave., to the:

❺ Canton Bazaar

This crowded, multilevel bazaar is a fun place to pick up some souvenirs or just explore.

Walk another block to 717 Grant Ave., to the:

❻ Chinatown Kite Shop

Kids will be amazed by the plethora of different kites here—some of them designed to do very radical stunts. Buy a kite and test it out on the Marina Green in the afternoon (when it's usually windy). For kids or parents with a culinary bent, **The Wok Shop** across the street has every utensil needed to create your own Chinese cuisine at home.

Head west on Sacramento Street until you see:

❼ Waverly Place

This 2-block alley between Sacramento and Washington streets is also known as the "Street of Painted Balconies." Here you'll find a number of interesting stores, including the **Clarion Music Center** on the south corner of Waverly Place and Sacramento Street. You'll also find a store specializing in ceremonial papers and incense, a Chinese artist's gallery, a trophy-filled herbal shop, and a gift shop with many bonsai trees.

Make your way to 125 Waverly Place. On the top floor you'll find the:

❽ Tien Hou Temple

Located up three flights of stairs is one of the oldest Chinese temples in America. Established in 1852, the temple has an elaborate altar holding a statue of Tien Hou, or Tin How, "Queen of the Heavens and Goddess of the Seven Seas." Please tell children to keep it down, as people may be meditating and praying. Also, consider giving a donation or buying incense.

Continue down the block to Washington Street, cross, and go to the left to:

❾ Ross Alley

Ross Alley is decorated with murals detailing typical Chinatown scenes, like shopping and intergenerational families.

At 56 Ross Alley is a must-stop, the:

❿ Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Company

It's hard to believe this little alleyway nook can produce so many cookies. An unusual machine squirts batter onto tiny round plates, which move along a conveyer belt through an oven. An employee then takes the freshly baked cookies, folds a fortune into them, and lays them on a rack to cool and harden. Fortune cookies were actually invented in California less than a century ago.

TAKE A BREAK

Buy a bag of fortune or almond cookies at the fortune cookie factory and munch on them to fortify yourselves before encountering the sights and smells of Stockton Street. Try the unfolded, fortune-less cookies—that's how Chinatown locals prefer them.

1 The Dragon's Gate
2 Grant Avenue
3 St. Mary's Square
4 Old St. Mary's Church
5 Canton Bazaar
6 Chinatown Kite Shop
7 Waverly Place
8 Tin How Temple
9 Ross Alley
10 Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Company
Fortune Cookies
11 Stockton Street
12 Chinese Historical Society of America
13 Portsmouth Square
R&G Lounge

The "Only in San Francisco" Checklist of Rare or Unusual Sights

As you wander around town, look for the people and objects listed below. Some are easier to find than others, but if you check off more than half, you've really gotten around.

- **Art cars:** Keep your eyes peeled for weird and wonderful autos. You'll know one when you see it. There's a GI Joe–covered station wagon and other cars painted in weird and wacky colors, traveling canvases of public art. The end of September brings the ArtCar Fest to the Bay Area (www.artcar-fest.com), a gathering of these wildly decorated vehicles and the people who love them.
- **Critical mass:** On the last Friday of every month at 5:30pm, a huge group of gonzo bicyclists takes over the streets, much to the consternation of any drivers who get caught unawares. The launch pad is usually the Embarcadero BART Station. The path varies.
- **A Chinatown funeral procession:** Look for a fancy convertible decorated with pictures of the deceased followed by the Green Street Band playing Western pop tunes. Funeral corteges generally tour North Beach and Chinatown.
- **The doorman at the Sir Francis Drake:** For more than 3 decades, Tom Sweeney has greeted guests of the Sir Francis Drake in a traditional beefeater outfit.
- **Lotta's Fountain:** The meeting place every April 18 at 5:13am for the few remaining survivors of the 1906 earthquake and fire. The fountain served as a community bulletin board where people left notes for missing friends and family after the disaster. Thousands met here on the quake's 100th anniversary. You'll spot it on the corner of Market and Kearny streets.
- **Nancy Pelosi:** The first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives hails from San Francisco's Pacific Heights neighborhood. Occasionally she shows up unannounced at local comedy clubs.
- **The rock balancer:** Bill Dan rides his bike to Crissy Field many afternoons and promptly draws huge crowds by balancing large rocks on top of each other in apparently gravity-defying ways. He uses no glue, yet his towers miraculously withstand the afternoon breezes.
- **The twins:** Nob Hill residents Vivian and Marian Brown, blond, coiffed, 80-something identical twin sisters, are local celebrities simply for dressing exactly alike (fabulously so) and never being seen without one another. Spotting them is said to be good luck!
- **The wild parrots of Telegraph Hill:** A famous flock of wild green parrots, descendents of escapee pets, roosts in the trees around the Filbert Steps. Listen for the noise of their cawing and then see if you can spot these cherry-headed birds.
- **Robin Williams:** The actor/comedian lives near Baker Beach and is said to jog along Crissy Field. Occasionally he shows up unannounced at local comedy clubs.

Walk north to Jackson Street, take a left and another left onto:

⓫ Stockton Street

Grant Street appeals to tourists, but Stockton Street is where Chinatown locals do their shopping. In grocery stores, pigs hang from hooks and crates overflow with exotic vegetables and fruits. Some kids may be transfixed by the live frogs, turtles, eels, and other sea creatures on offer, but it could be too much for squeamish children. Also on this street, herb shops sell dried plants and animal parts, which are weighed out using old-fashioned balance scales, following prescriptions written by traditional Chinese healers. Other stores sell ceremonial "money" and paper goods to be burnt as offerings to ancestors. Even paper DVD players and washing machines are for sale, as no one knows for sure what's needed in the afterlife.

Walk down to Clay Street and turn right. Go to 965 Clay St., to the:

⓬ Chinese Historical Society of America

Founded in 1963, the purpose of the society is to record and disseminate information about the history and contributions of Chinese immigrants in America. Here you'll find artifacts, documents, and photographs, such as clothing from the earliest immigrants, traditional herbs, and the original Chinatown telephone book. (For open hours and admission, see p. 166.)

Now walk east on Clay Street past Grant Avenue. On your left you'll find:

⓭ Portsmouth Square

Captain John B. Montgomery of the USS *Portsmouth* raised a flag here in 1846 to declare San Francisco part of the United States. A year later California's first public school was opened on the plaza, and just a year after that Sam Brannan announced the discovery of gold in the state. Today, the square is an important communal center for Chinatown residents, who practice tai chi, gamble over cards, or bring children to frolic here. Grab a seat on a bench and let the kids run around to work up an appetite.

Walk down Clay Street to Kearny Street and make a right. Go to 631 Kearney St., where you can:

TAKE A BREAK
If you're ready for a substantial meal, try **The R&G Lounge,** which features more authentic menu items than you find in many Chinese restaurants. See p. 120.

THE WALKING TOUR 2 — EMBARCADERO & FISHERMAN'S WHARF

Start: AT&T Park.
Finish: Aquatic Park.
Time: Half a day.
Best Time: Any warm weekday.
Worst Time: Any summer Saturday when PIER 39 is packed with tourists.

This is an easy, flat 3-mile stroll that's meant to take a good half day with stops to play and eat.

To get to AT&T Park, take the closest Muni streetcar. All the underground streetcars, except certain N-Judah trains, end at the Embarcadero Station. If you are not already on an N-Judah that goes to the Mission Bay/Cal Train Station, cross to the other side of the platform at the Embarcadero Station and board one. As you come out from below ground, look for the large brick Hills Plaza, at 345 Spear St., constructed in 1925. Just south of this national landmark building is:

1 AT&T Park

This home of the San Francisco Giants baseball team, located at 2nd and King streets, was the first privately financed major league baseball park since Dodger Stadium in 1962. A fun playground behind the bleachers has an 80-foot wooden Coca-Cola bottle with some of the best slides in town. There's also an area where kids can practice their own game of baseball and a parked cable car that's a hit with little ones. The play area is free and open to the public unless there's a game going on.

From the stadium, walk north on:

2 Herb Caen Way

This section of the Embarcadero honors the departed newspaper columnist Herb Caen, who reported on the city's movers and shakers and wrote about San Francisco with humor and passion for 50 years.

On the right you'll come to:

3 South Beach Park

This park contains a little playground suitable for preschoolers. The 70-foot-tall, 10-ton sculpture by Mark di Suvero is called "Sea Change."

Continuing along the Embarcadero, the next landmark you come to on Pier 40 is the:

4 Bike Hut

The owner of this not-for-profit shop hires and trains at-risk youth to repair bikes, and he's a bit of a character in his own right. If you decide to abandon your walk in favor of a bike ride, you can rent a bike for $5 an hour or $20 per day. Fees include a lock and helmet. Open daily 10am to 6pm (✆ **415/543-4335;** www.thebikehut.com).

Continue down the Embarcadero toward the Bay Bridge. On your right is Pier 24, the home of:

5 Firehouse Engine 35

Peek through the fence to see Fireboat 1. If you've ever wondered what happens if a ship catches fire, now you know.

The view opens up as you pass the bridge. Sailboats ply the water, bicyclists and skaters zip by, and coming into view is the:

6 Ferry Building

Built in 1898, this building was once the city's transportation hub. Today, the elegantly refurbished building houses some of the best gourmet food stores in the city. Before 2pm on Saturdays, you'll find a terrific farmers' market here. Enjoy free samples of ripe fruits, roasted nuts, and delectable cheeses as you marvel at the bounty of local farms and pastures, as well as the talent of the Bay Area's bakers and chefs. A much smaller farmers' market is here on Tuesdays as well.

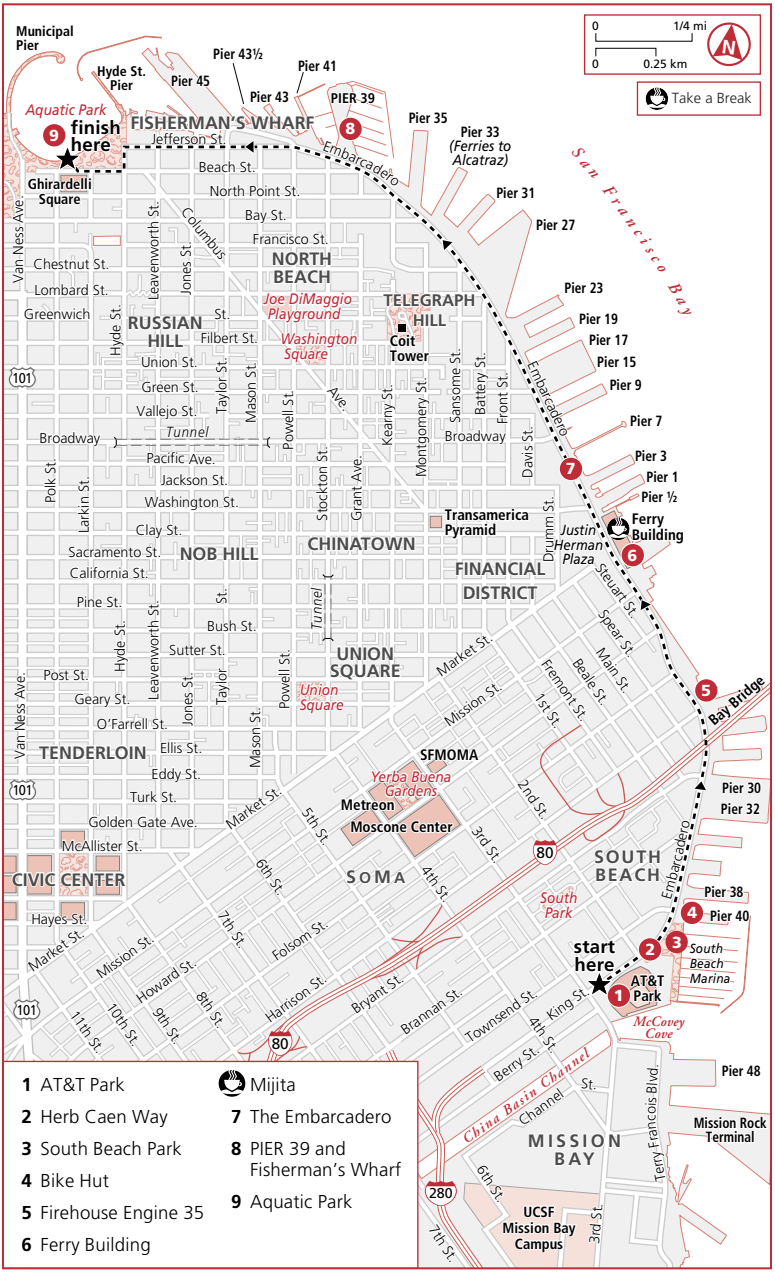
TAKE A BREAK

On Saturdays, buy breakfast from one of the restaurant carts behind the Ferry Building. Grab a bench and enjoy a mouth-watering meal as you watch the ferries come and go. At other times, one of our favorite destinations in the Ferry Building is **Mijita** (p. 125), with its inexpensive, but top-quality, Mexican specialties such as fresh fish tacos and hearty burritos, all enjoyed with a view of the bay.

Continue northwest, along:

7 The Embarcadero

The entire stretch of oceanfront walkway between the Ferry Building and Fisherman's Wharf is a magnet for pedestrians, cyclists, and runners. Pier 7 was a celebrated skateboarding destination for youths from diverse backgrounds until barriers were placed to prevent them from getting fresh air and exercise. Well, I'm not sure why the barriers were put there, but



1 AT&T Park
2 Herb Caen Way
3 South Beach Park
4 Bike Hut
5 Firehouse Engine 35
6 Ferry Building

Mijita
7 The Embarcadero
8 PIER 39 and Fisherman's Wharf
9 Aquatic Park

Tips Feet, Don't Fail Me Now

If little legs tire, there are alternatives. The F-Market streetcar makes several stops on its route down Market Street to the Ferry Building and just beyond PIER 39. You'll also see "pedicabs," pedal-powered minicabs, wheeling around the Embarcadero. Two or three people can fit on the single seat, and the driver will whisk you off to a nearby destination for $4 to $8 per person, depending on where you're headed.

it's too bad. Anyway, what you will find along this stretch of city, in addition to views of the bay and urban skyline, are several 13-foot-tall metal pylons and bronze plaques embedded in the sidewalk. The pylons and plaques are imprinted with photographs, drawings, poetry, and historical facts about the waterfront.

Continue along the water until you get to:

8 PIER 39 & Fisherman's Wharf

The distance from Pier 7 to PIER 39 is less than a mile, but as you approach Fisherman's Wharf the activity level rises dramatically. The number of families waiting for ferries to Alcatraz or Sausalito combined with tourists milling around the boardwalk gives a carnival-like feel to the atmosphere. It can overwhelm younger children, so keep an especially close watch on yours. There are plenty of things to see in this area (see the "Fisherman's Wharf" section under "The Top Attractions," in chapter 6, for details). You may want to end your tour here, but I'd suggest forging ahead, as the nicest part of the wharf lies just beyond.

Once you pass the masses on Jefferson Street, the crowd thins and the city begins to feel like it's yours again by the time you reach the end of this stroll at:

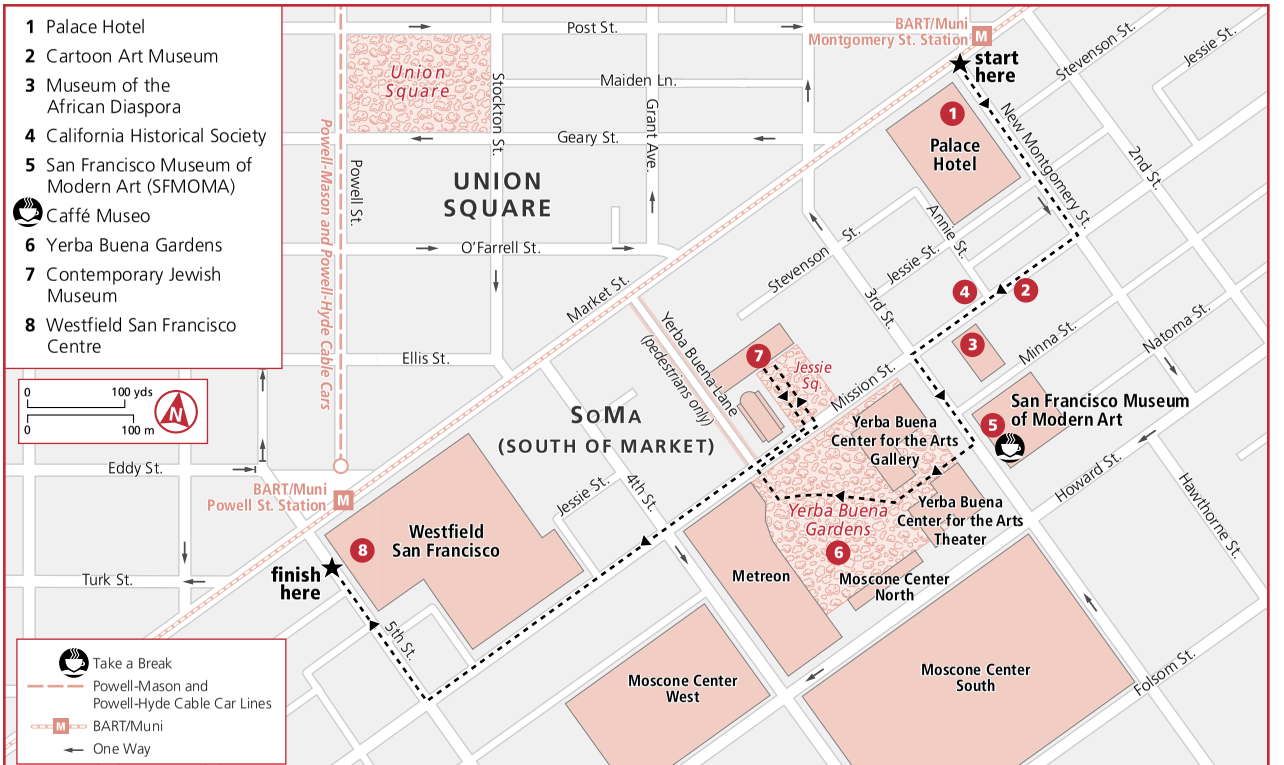
9 Aquatic Park

You have reached the **Hyde Street Pier,** the Municipal Pier, a large grassy park, and a small strip of man-made beach. Every morning, hearty members of the Dolphin Club brave the beach's frigid waters, where temperatures usually linger in the low 50s (or low teens Celcius), rarely cresting 60°F (16°C). Kids will enjoy playing in the sand or running around on the grassy park. Walk out on the municipal pier for great views, or head up to **Ghirardelli Square** for views of the bay from on high.

WALKING TOUR 3 SOUTH OF MARKET

Start:	**Palace Hotel.**
Finish:	**Westfield San Francisco Centre.**
Time:	**Two hours to a half-day, depending on how long you spend at Yerba Buena Gardens and the other attractions.**
Best Time:	**Weekends when there's entertainment at Yerba Buena Gardens.**
Worst Time:	**Anytime Zeum is closed.**

This stroll doesn't cover much square footage, as the attractions south of Market Street are contained in the blocks between Market and Howard streets from 2nd to 5th streets. There are so many, however, that you could spend most of the day here.


1 Palace Hotel
2 Cartoon Art Museum
3 Museum of the African Diaspora
4 California Historical Society
5 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA)
Caffé Museo
6 Yerba Buena Gardens
7 Contemporary Jewish Museum
8 Westfield San Francisco Centre
0 100 yds
0 100 m
N
Take a Break
Powell-Mason and Powell-Hyde Cable Car Lines
BART/Muni
One Way
Post St.
Union Square
Stockton St.
Maiden Ln.
Grant Ave.
Geary St.
Powell St.
UNION SQUARE
O'Farrell St.
Market St.
Ellis St.
Eddy St.
Turk St.
Powell-Mason and Powell-Hyde Cable Cars
BART/Muni Powell St. Station
BART/Muni Montgomery St. Station
start here
finish here
Stevenson St.
Jessie St.
New Montgomery St.
2nd St.
Palace Hotel
Annie St.
Stevenson St.
3rd St.
Minna St.
Natoma St.
Yerba Buena Lane (pedestrians only)
Jessie Sq.
Mission St.
SoMa (SOUTH OF MARKET)
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Gallery
Howard St.
Hawthorne St.
Jessie St.
4th St.
Yerba Buena Gardens
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater
Westfield San Francisco
Metreon
Moscone Center North
5th St.
Moscone Center West
Moscone Center South
Folsom St.

Begin your walk at 2 New Montgomery St. at Market Street, at the:

1 Palace Hotel

The stained-glass-domed Garden Court dining room at this historic landmark was formerly the carriage entrance. With its massive marble columns and ceiling made from 80,000 panes of glass, it is one of the most extraordinary public rooms in the city. Poke your heads into the **Pied Piper Bar** as well to regard the $2.5-million Maxfield Parrish painting of the same name.

Next, walk east on New Montgomery to Mission Street and turn right. Across the street, at 655 Mission St., is the:

2 Cartoon Art Museum

This small gallery contains movie cels, political cartoons, and underground comics. Although younger kids may enjoy seeing scenes from Disney movies and teens may appreciate the more sophisticated political cartoons, I find this place somewhat limited, considering the entrance fee. If the weather is bad, step inside. Otherwise, give yourself more time at Yerba Buena Gardens.

Almost next door, at 685 Mission St., is the:

3 Museum of the African Diaspora

This diminutive museum celebrates the contributions of peoples of African descent across the globe. Though a bit pricey for its size, it does have some worthwhile exhibits, starting with the 3-story-tall portrait of an African girl (made up of thousands of photos) visible from outside.

Now cross the street. At 678 Mission St., step into the:

4 California Historical Society

The collection is aimed at researchers, but a quick look at the surveyor's maps, photographs, Native American artifacts, and exhibit on the California missions and Junipero Serra will take at most 20 minutes and could give your student a heads-up in history class. Open Wednesday through Sunday. Call ✆ **415/357-1848** or visit www.californiahistoricalsociety.org for more information.

Continue heading down Mission Street. Make a left on 3rd Street. On your left will be the:

5 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA)

In addition to a spectacular permanent collection of 20th-century art and equally impressive temporary exhibits, the museum's Learning Lounge offers activities for kids.

TAKE A BREAK

The **Caffé Museo** at the SFMOMA has tasty soups, salads, and sandwiches, as well as indoor and outdoor seating.

A walk up 4th Street and a left onto Market Street brings you to the:

6 Yerba Buena Gardens

After solemnly viewing modern art, your kids will be glad for the opportunity to run around and stretch their legs. Depending on ages and interests, they can enjoy the play area and slides, carousel, ice skating rink, bowling lanes, or Zeum. (The full list of options are described under "Yerba Buena Gardens" and "Zeum" in chapter 6.) Or you can just stroll around the gardens that border Mission Street. Here you'll find a waterfall memorial honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which kids love to run behind, and a "Sister Cities" garden.

For one more educational experience, cross the street to 736 Mission St.:

7 Contemporary Jewish Museum

Budding architects in your group will appreciate the compelling design by Daniel Libeskind, a $48-million adaptation of an old power plant. Exhibits focus on Jewish community and culture, but tend to come up short on offering insights into Jewish traditions or history. Check in advance to see if there's a current exhibit that may interest your kids.

Now head east on Mission Street. Cross 4th Street. and walk another half-block to Bloomingdale's and the:

8 Westfield San Francisco Centre

If family members still have energy after the edifying excursion throughout SoMa, there's always the mall—and what a mall it is. The 1.5-million-square-foot complex, reportedly the largest shopping center in an urban area, features a 102-foot-wide sky-lit dome built in 1908. You'll find Bloomingdale's, Nordstrom, and more than 180 stores here. Kids may like the Sanrio (makers of Hello Kitty) store below the Nordstrom or the Discovery Store in the mall's new wing. There are also plenty of kids' clothing options for ages 0 to 18. If everyone's ready to go home, the Powell Street Muni and BART stations are across the street.

WALKING TOUR 4 RUSSIAN HILL TO TELEGRAPH HILL

Start: Lombard Street.
Finish: Levi Strauss Plaza.
Time: Three hours.
Best Time: Mornings.
Worst Time: Weekend afternoons when Lombard Street fills with cars.

"Stroll" probably isn't the most accurate word to describe this walk. Encompassing some hills and stairways, you'll see many of San Francisco's best known sights, but this trek is really for kids who need to burn off some energy. If there's a chance you'll end up having to carry a child, I'd think twice about this tour. Hills are steep and strollers will make negotiating the stairways difficult.

Start anywhere you can pick up the Powell-Hyde cable car and exit at:

1 Lombard Street

"The Crookedest Street in the World" isn't even the crookedest in San Francisco, but it is pretty. Walk down the staircases on either side of the car-clogged road.

At Leavenworth Street turn left and walk 1 block to Chestnut Street. Turn right and look for 800 Chestnut St., where you'll find the:

2 San Francisco Art Institute

Founded in 1871, this is the oldest art school in the West. A fountain in the entrance courtyard has a handful of surprisingly small carp that tots may want to peer at before you enter the Diego Rivera Gallery (to your left) to admire a 1931 mural by the Mexican artist, as well a changing collection of student artwork. The **Art Institute Café** is a good place for an inexpensive lunch with a great view. Next to the cafe is a balcony offering an unobstructed bay view.

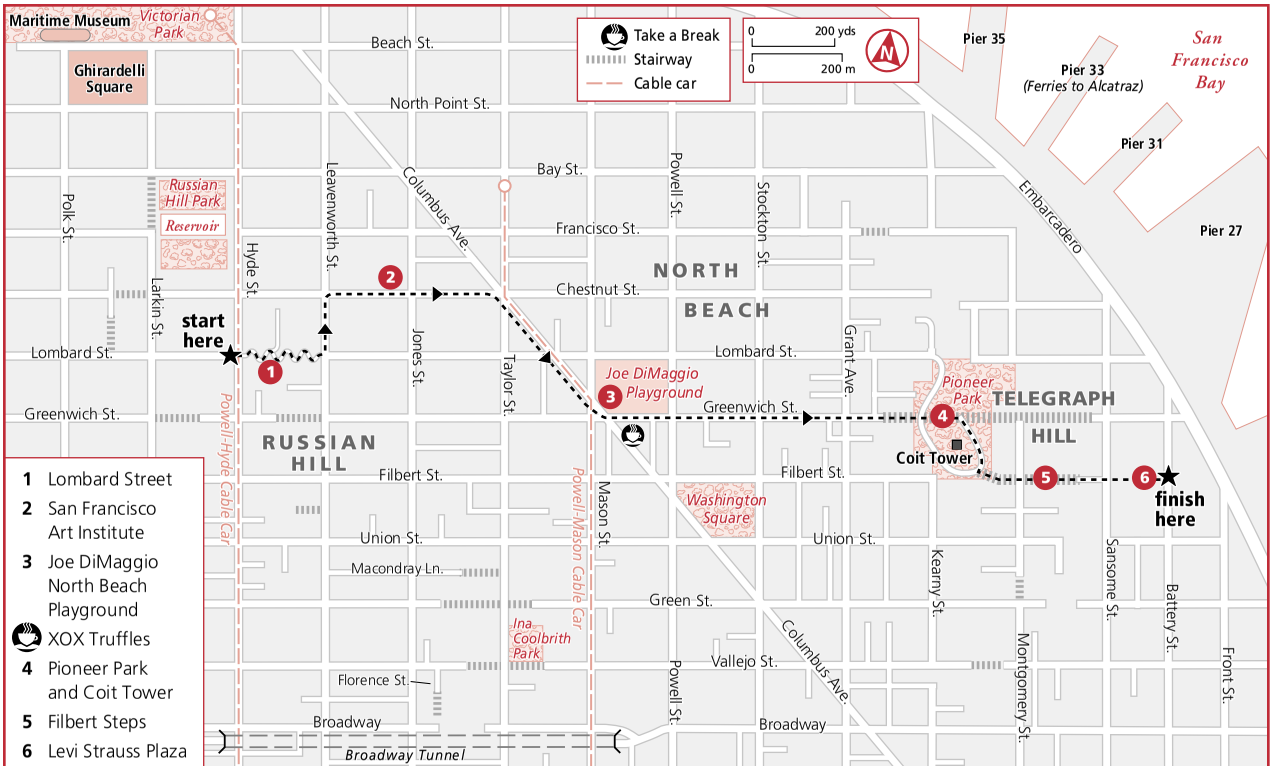
Walk downhill 1½ blocks east to Columbus Avenue, which cuts through North Beach. Head right to the junction of Columbus, Mason, and Lombard streets.

3 Joe DiMaggio North Beach Playground

This 2½-acre park includes two pools, bocce ball courts, and a large playground (the entrance to the playground is on Greenwich St.).

From the park, walk ½ block south on Columbus Avenue to 754 Columbus Ave.

TAKE A BREAK
Fortify yourselves for the uphill trek. At **XOXT ruffles** (754 Columbus Ave.; ✆ **415/421-4814**) sip an espresso and treat the kids to a chocolate truffle. Peanut butter and white chocolate are two flavors popular with the little ones.


Maritime Museum
Victorian Park
Ghirardelli Square
Beach St.
North Point St.
Bay St.
Francisco St.
Chestnut St.
Lombard St.
Greenwich St.
Filbert St.
Union St.
Macondray Ln.
Green St.
Vallejo St.
Florence St.
Broadway
Broadway Tunnel
Russian Hill Park
Reservoir
Polk St.
Hyde St.
Larkin St.
Leavenworth St.
Jones St.
Taylor St.
Columbus Ave.
Powell St.
Stockton St.
Mason St.
Grant Ave.
Kearny St.
Sansome St.
Battery St.
Front St.
Montgomery St.
Embarcadero
Pier 35
Pier 33
(Ferries to Alcatraz)
Pier 31
Pier 27
San Francisco Bay
NORTH BEACH
RUSSIAN HILL
TELEGRAPH HILL
Joe DiMaggio Playground
Pioneer Park
Coit Tower
Washington Square
Ina Coolbrith Park
Powell-Hyde Cable Car
Powell-Mason Cable Car
start here
finish here
Take a Break
Stairway
Cable car
0 200 yds
0 200 m
1 Lombard Street
2 San Francisco Art Institute
3 Joe DiMaggio North Beach Playground
XOX Truffles
4 Pioneer Park and Coit Tower
5 Filbert Steps
6 Levi Strauss Plaza

Walk back to Greenwich Street. Walk east 2½ blocks. A half-block past Grant Avenue are the Greenwich Steps, which lead to:

4 Pioneer Park & Coit Tower

Listen for the wild parrots carrying on. Then get your camera ready to photograph both the birds and the stellar view from Coit Tower, a 210-foot landmark that boasts some of the greatest views in the city.

On either side of Pioneer Park are more stairs; the wooden ones on the south side are the:

5 Filbert Steps

Take the stairs down the hill, stopping to exclaim over the Grace Marchant garden and the Victorian cottages, some of the oldest homes in the city. As you'll notice, no cars can come this way . . . imagine taking groceries home!

The steps will bring you to:

6 Levi Strauss Plaza

Here are the headquarters of Levi Strauss & Co., which was founded in San Francisco. Legend has it that during the gold rush, Levi Strauss had the idea of making trousers out of tent fabric, and he strengthened the pockets with rivets so that they could withstand the work of mining and the weight of gold. History is also found under the plaza, below which lie some of the hundreds of ships abandoned by crews eager to head for the hills during the height of the gold rush. The kids can reward themselves for their walking efforts with a frolic in the plaza's walk-through fountain; they won't get wet unless it's on purpose.

WALKING TOUR 5 THE MARINA

Start:	**Palace of Fine Arts.**
Finish:	**Fort Mason.**
Time:	**At least 3 hours, depending how long you stay at the Exploratorium.**
Best Time:	**Mornings.**
Worst Time:	**Evenings.**

This walk takes you through one of the more scenic residential neighborhoods of San Francisco. Plan on spending all morning here, or longer, if you want more time for the Exploratorium.

Starting from Union Square, take the no. 30-Stockton bus to The Marina. Exit at the corner of Broderick and Jefferson streets. Walk 1 block east to Baker Street and continue across the lawn. On your left you'll see the:

1 Exploratorium

A terrific institution dedicated to interactive education, this science museum will delight kids of all ages and their parents. Plan to spend at least an hour here.

Adjacent to the Exploratorium is:

2 The Palace of Fine Arts

This is the only structure left from the Panama-Pacific Exhibition of 1915. Kids can enjoy running around the lovely grounds of this neoclassical dome and gazing at the ducks, swans, geese, and seagulls in the pond.

From here walk up Baker Street toward the water. Cross Marina Boulevard and go straight ahead to the Marina breakwater. Walk to the end of the breakwater, where you'll find the:

3 Wave Organ

Designed by scientists from the Exploratorium, this unusual structure is an amazing piece of environmental art. Listening tubes emerge from the water below the concrete and rock structure, capturing the ebb and

flow of the ocean currents in strange gurgling and humming sounds.

From here, walk back to the start of the jetty and head east. You'll be walking along the:

4 Marina Green

This stretch of lawn along the San Francisco Bay is a popular place to run, walk, bike, or rollerblade. On weekends, it's filled with kids playing soccer and, especially on windy afternoons, people flying myriad colorful and acrobatic kites.

Walk until you reach Fillmore Street and then turn right. Walk down to Chestnut Street and turn right.

5 Chestnut Street

Lined with shops and cafes, this popular street is in one of the most family-oriented neighborhoods of San Francisco. The plethora of strollers is a guarantee that you'll find plenty of family-friendly restaurants here. Your kids may want to stop at **Catnip and Bones** (2220 Chestnut St.) to pick up a gift for your pet back home. If another sibling is on the way, stop by **Dress Maternity** (2258 Chestnut St.) to shop for some of the most stylish maternity attire anywhere.

TAKE A BREAK

Among the many kid-friendly places to eat on this street is **Dragon Well** (p. 136), which serves fresh and healthy Chinese food. If it's sunny, snag an outdoor table at **The Grove** (p. 136), which has great salads and sandwiches. After lunch, buy a cone at **Santa Barbara Ice Cream and Yogurt** at 2240 Chestnut St., which carries **Mitchell's Ice Cream** (p. 147), the best in town.

Walk east on Chestnut Street, continuing across Fillmore Street. On your left you will see the:

6 George R. Moscone Recreation Center

The soccer and baseball fields here fill up with boys and girls at team practice in the afternoons and weekends. Younger kids will love the enclosed playground, which has structures appropriate for toddlers and children up to 8 years old, as well as the only two seesaws I've seen in San Francisco. The Marina branch of the public library next to the playground has a nice children's section and will have a new teen zone when it reopens in early 2007.

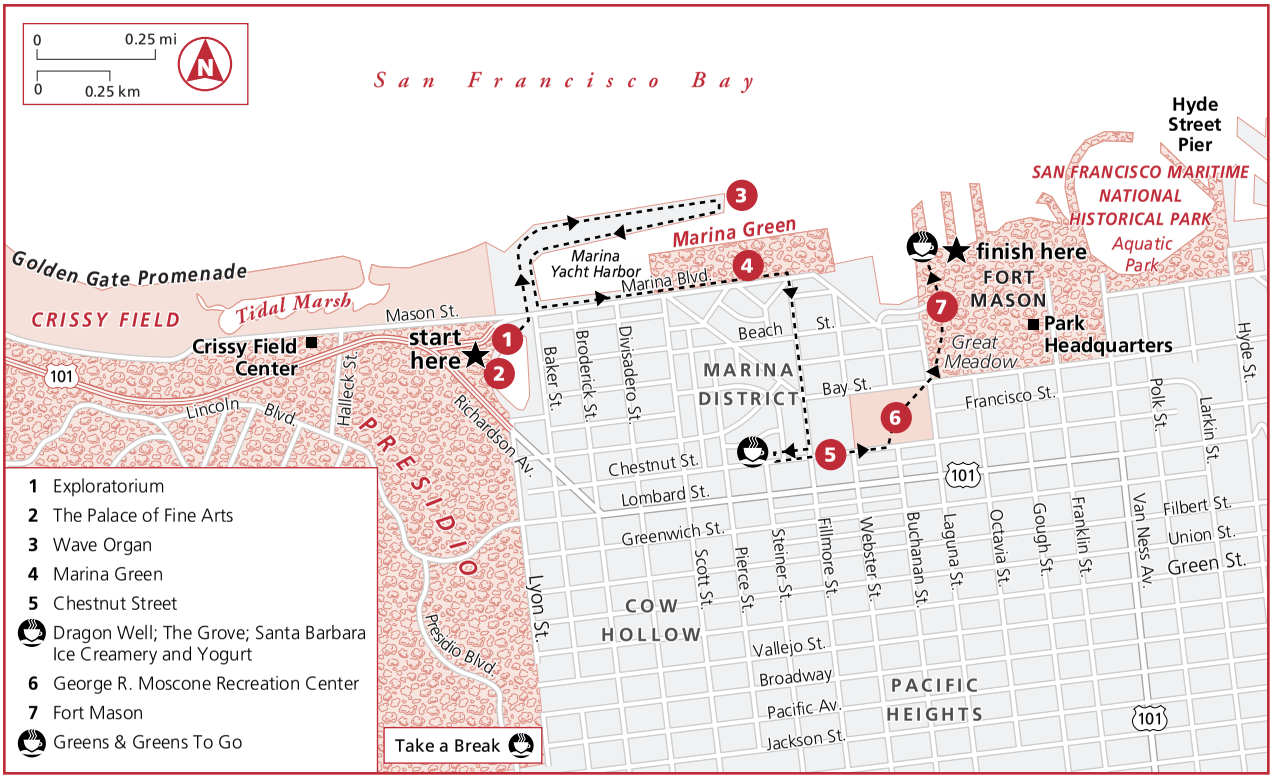
From Chestnut Street you can catch the no. 30-Stockton bus back to downtown. If you are still raring to go, walk northeast across the park, toward the corner of Laguna and Bay streets. Cross Bay Street. On your right will be:

7 Fort Mason

The collection of piers, buildings, and expansive lawn known as Fort Mason belonged to the U.S. military until 1972. During World War II and the Korean conflict, it was the point of embarkation for well over a million U.S. servicemen. Let kids run around on the grass while you enjoy the view or walk down to the **Fort Mason Center** to check out the many diverse museums there.

TAKE A BREAK

If you're ready to eat again, don't miss **Greens** (p. 133), a great vegetarian restaurant with one of the best views in town. Or stop at Greens To Go, where you can pick up a drink and pastry and then walk out to admire the view from the sailboat marina next to Fort Mason.


0 0.25 mi
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N
San Francisco Bay
Hyde Street Pier
SAN FRANCISCO MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
Aquatic Park
finish here
FORT MASON
Park Headquarters
Great Meadow
Marina Green
Marina Yacht Harbor
Marina Blvd.
Golden Gate Promenade
CRISSY FIELD
Tidal Marsh
Mason St.
Crissy Field Center
start here
101
Lincoln Blvd.
Halleck St.
Baker St.
Broderick St.
Divisadero St.
Beach St.
MARINA DISTRICT
Bay St.
Francisco St.
Chestnut St.
Lombard St.
Greenwich St.
Richardson Av.
PRESIDIO
Lyon St.
Presidio Blvd.
Scott St.
Pierce St.
Steiner St.
Fillmore St.
Webster St.
Buchanan St.
Laguna St.
Octavia St.
Gough St.
Franklin St.
Van Ness Av.
Polk St.
Larkin St.
Hyde St.
Filbert St.
Union St.
Green St.
COW HOLLOW
Vallejo St.
Broadway
Pacific Av.
Jackson St.
PACIFIC HEIGHTS
1 Exploratorium
2 The Palace of Fine Arts
3 Wave Organ
4 Marina Green
5 Chestnut Street
Dragon Well; The Grove; Santa Barbara Ice Creamery and Yogurt
6 George R. Moscone Recreation Center
7 Fort Mason
Greens & Greens To Go
Take a Break

Start: Mission Dolores
Finish: Mission Cultural Center
Time: Two hours.
Best Time: Daylight hours.
Worst Time: Late afternoon, evening.

Combining California history, Latino and Bohemian culture, eye-popping artwork, and tasty treats, this tour provides a fun glimpse into one of San Francisco's most unique and colorful neighborhoods.

Take the J-Church streetcar to Church and 16th St., and walk one block east, or the 22-Fillmore bus to Dolores and 16th sts., where you'll see:

1 Mission Dolores

This diminutive adobe chapel built in the 18th century using indigenous and Spanish methods has survived many earthquakes and is the oldest building in San Francisco! Inside, note the ceiling painted in vegetable dye with Native American tribal patterns. Although a few of the wooden tombstones in the graveyard, dating from 1830, are no longer legible, you can still read several names of the early pioneers. It's quite moving. (See p. 180 for more on Mission Dolores.)

Next, walk south on Dolores Street to 18th Street On the corner is:

2 Mission Dolores Park

Also described on p. 184, this lovely park was established in 1905 and served, one year later, as a refugee camp for more than 1,600 families left homeless by the 1906 earthquake and fires. Let your kids run around—provided they don't run after any off-leash dogs—while you savor the city views from the park's upper reaches.

Walk back down the grassy hill to 19th Street and head east. Cross Guerrero and you'll soon reach:

3 Mission Playground

Striking artwork decorates the municipal pool here. "The New World Tree," a collaboration of three Latino artists, depicts branches holding a man, woman, boy, and girl, and, atop them all, a baby. Light radiates from the center of the tree, water and sky glisten, and animals graze peacefully in this modern-day Eden. The over-the-top imagery is typical of the murals in the area, and makes great fodder for conversation with all but the youngest art-appreciators.

Now continue on 19th Street until you reach Valencia Street. Turn right and you'll see:

4 826 Valencia Writing Project

Author Dave Eggers created this place to help children ages 6 to 18 with writing and the literary arts through tutoring and workshops. The welcoming space also hosts multiple school field trips per week.

Continue walking south:

5 Valencia Street

This Bohemian street is a bastion of trendy restaurants and funky shopping; it's where the city's starving artists live and its emerging chefs cook. Walk slowly and window-shop until your reach your next destination.

6 24th Street

This leafy street lined with Mexican bakeries and other distinctly Latino stores is a focal point for the neighborhood's Latino residents. As you walk east you'll see an eye-catching mural at the northeast corner of Mission and 24th streets. Continue on 24th Street and you'll see another one at the corner with South Van Ness Street, titled *Carnaval,* which depicts the Mission festival that occurs yearly in May.

1 Mission Dolores
2 Mission Dolores Park
3 Mission Playground
4 Valencia Writing Project
5 Valencia Street
6 24th Street
7 Balmy Alley
8 Precita Eyes Mural Arts Center
Dominguez Bakery
9 Discolandia
10 Galeria de la Raza
11 Mission Cultural Center
La Corneta Taqueria
start here
finish here
Muni Church St. Station
BART 16th St. Station
BART 24th St. Station
Mission Dolores
Mission Dolores Park
Mission Playground
THE MISSION
BERNAL HEIGHTS
Garfield Square
Balmy Alley
Cesar Chavez St.
14th St.
15th St.
16th St.
17th St.
18th St.
19th St.
20th St.
21st St.
22nd St.
23rd St.
24th St.
25th St.
26th St.
Liberty St.
Hill St.
Clipper St.
Dorland St.
Cumberland St.
Chula Ln.
Clarion Aly.
Sycamore St.
Church St.
Landers St.
Dolores St.
Valencia St.
Julian Ave.
Caledonia St.
Wiese St.
Mission St.
Capp St.
Albion St.
Rondel Pl.
Hoff St.
Guerrero St.
Dearborn St.
Oakwood St.
Linda St.
Lapidge St.
Lexington St.
San Carlos St.
South Van Ness Ave.
Shotwell St.
Folsom St.
Treat Ave.
Harrison St.
Alabama St.
Florida St.
Bryant St.
Bartlett St.
Ames St.
Quane St.
Chattanooga St.
Fair Oaks St.
San Jose Ave.
Poplar St.
Orange Alley
Osage St.
Lilac St.
Cypress St.
Lucky St.
Muni F,J
Muni J
Golden Gate Bridge
San Francisco Bay
PACIFIC OCEAN
PRESIDIO
Bay Bridge
SAN FRANCISCO
GOLDEN GATE PARK
Area of detail
0 1/4 mi
0 0.25 km
Take a Break
BART
Muni

Continue east on 24th Street until you pass Treat Avenue. Halfway down the block on your right will be:

❼ Balmy Alley

In the 1980s, an ingenious group of artists began transforming a nondescript back alley running between garage doors and garden walls into an eclectic gallery of expressive art, enhanced with lovely flowering vines and plants. Your children are sure to appreciate the at times whimsical, at times earnest, always provocative murals. Ask them to see if they can find any "symbols" in the murals—like a butterfly of freedom or a third eye of wisdom. That will keep them entertained for quite a while.

Walk to the end of Balmy Alley to:

❽ Garfield Square

Among the many impressive murals are *The Primal Sea* on 26th Street and the 1973 Diego Rivera mural with Mayan and Aztec themes, on Harrison Street. Be sure also to check out the brightly decorated homes, including those across the street from the Rivera mural.

Walk back on Balmy Alley to 24th Street and turn right. Cross Harrison Street and at 2981 24th St. you'll see:

❾ Precita Eyes Mural Arts Center

This group is responsible for many of the murals in the area, and also offers art classes for children. Ask inside this cheerful center about new murals in the area. The center also offers mural tours on weekend mornings at 11am and during the week by appointment. (Tours are $10 adults, $8 students with ID, $5 seniors and kids 12–16, free for kids under 12.)

Turn right out the door. A few doors down, on the corner with Alabama St., is:

TAKE A BREAK
Dominquez Bakery (2951 24th St.; ✆ **415/821-1717**). Stop into this very basic, but enticing, bakery for satisfying baked goods like *pan dulce* (sweet bread) or *elotes,* corn-shaped sweet bread. *Churros* are available only on weekends.

Just across the street, you'll find:

❿ Discolandia

If your kids are musically adventurous, they might appreciate a quick visit to this well-known Latin American music store. Don't be surprised if you find them doing a little shake to a salsa beat (2964 24th St.; ✆ **415/826-9446**).

Continue east to the corner with Bryant Street:

⓫ Galeria de la Raza

Dedicated to fostering public appreciation of Chicano/Latino art and culture, this small gallery holds captivating exhibitions and performances. If the gallery doesn't inspire the kids, they may prefer checking out the papier mache dolls and other clever Latin American imports in the gift shop (2857 24th St.; ✆ **415/826-8009**).

Now turn around and backtrack westward on 24th Street until you reach Mission Street. Turn left and walk one block until you reach:

⓬ Mission Cultural Center

This nonprofit organization promotes Latino cultural arts and offers dance, painting, and folk-art classes. The mural above the entrance, depicting Aztec gods, dancing skeletons, and seemingly destitute farmers, could disturb some kids. If so, take them quickly inside. Hopefully, the artist currently on exhibit in the second-floor gallery will be more uplifting. Either way, you've seen many exciting things on your tour. Now you can take the kids across the street to:

TAKE A BREAK
Cap your tour the Mission District with a very Mission-style meal: a burrito stuffed with your favorite fillings. **La Corneta Taqueria** (p. 147) makes the best ones in the neighborhood.

8 For the Active Family

Given its location in sunny California, San Francisco draws its fair share of outdoor and sports enthusiasts. Although the city proper may be fogbound in the summer, the temperate weather means staying indoors is rarely a more attractive option than getting outside. Green space is abundant—almost every neighborhood has a park or playground—and the bay, ocean, and woods are all immediately accessible. Even the mountains are just a few hours' drive away.

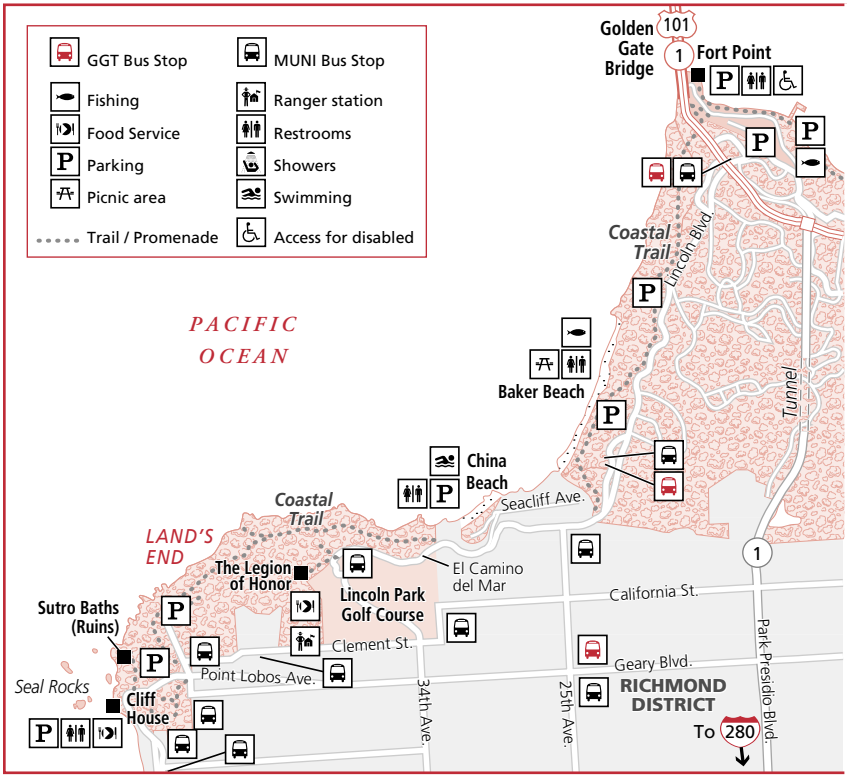
City residents have a terrific resource at their disposal in the form of the **San Francisco Recreation & Park Department** (✆ **415/831-2700;** www.parks.sfgov.org). Along with maintaining the parks, playgrounds, tennis courts, and swimming pools, this office runs all kinds of sports programs for kids and adults through the individual recreation centers found at the larger facilities such as Moscone Recreation Center in the Marina, Glen Park, Sunset Recreation Center, Balboa Park, and Potrero Hill. It even sponsors low-cost art classes at Sharon Studio in Golden Gate Park and a teen musical theater group that performs a few times a year. In the summer, basketball fans can attend exciting pro–am men's and women's basketball league games at Kezar Pavilion in the Haight for free. And did I mention golf? San Francisco has five gemlike public courses within city limits.

The **Golden Gate National Parks Association (GGNPA),** a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of our local open space, works hand in hand with the National Park Service to make the 75,000 acres of parkland under their jurisdiction as user-friendly and enticing as possible. Docents and rangers regularly lead walks and talks on the flora and fauna, history, and geology of the area. Walkers and hikers have much to explore, from the brick and granite fortifications in Fort Point to the remnants of Fort Funston, to the trails in the Marin Headlands just across the Golden Gate Bridge. The most recent addition to the GGNPA is **Crissy Field,** with a re-created tidal marsh, picnic facilities, an educational center, and the all-important Warming Hut, where you can get a hot chocolate.

For many kids, the best part of a vacation involves some active sport or outdoor adventure, be it ice skating, riding horses, swimming, fishing, or just taking a hike together. So although San Francisco's museums, shops, and restaurants may thrill parents, try to mix it up a little. There are plenty of wonderful, more active pursuits to consider as well.

1 PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS

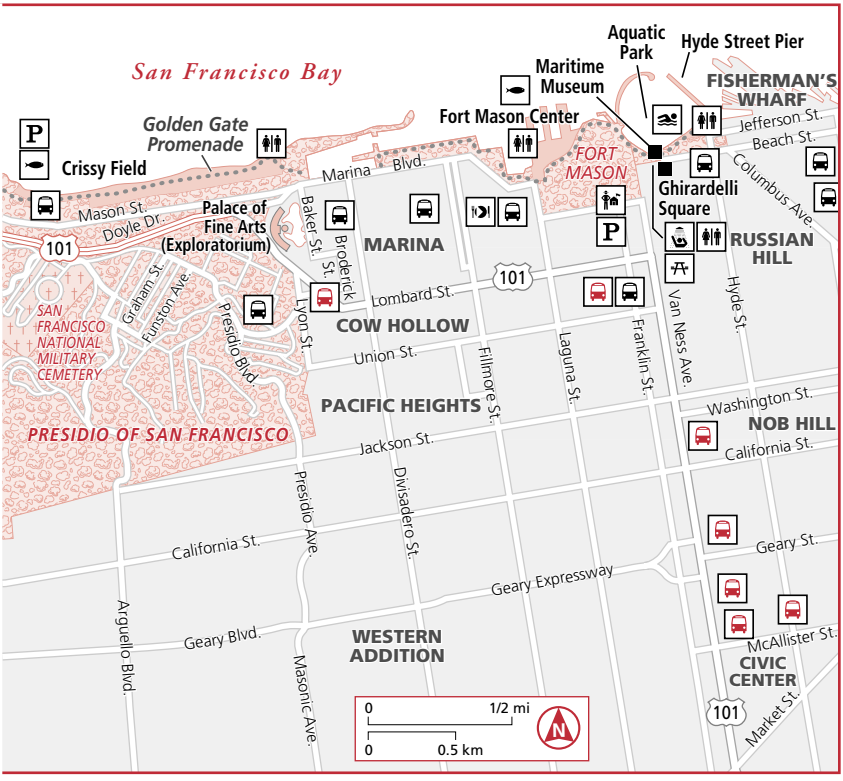
San Francisco supports many more parks in the city limits than those mentioned below. I've not listed playgrounds too far from the more touristed areas to be useful, unless there was a compelling reason to include them. For a more complete listing, visit the www.gokid.org or www.gocitykids.com websites. (The Recreation and Park website, while easier to navigate than in the past, doesn't offer a comprehensive, easy-to-read listing of playgrounds.)



Please note that some of San Francisco's parks are also popular with dogs and their owners. Some parks have designated off-leash areas, but—in keeping with San Francisco's free-spirited attitude—a few owners don't want to constrain the freedom of their animal companions (as opposed to calling them "pets") by keeping them on a leash, even in areas where the law dictates they do so. When dogs and kids find themselves occupying the same space, the result can be tension between dog owners and parents. Most dogs are well-trained and accustomed to sharing green space with children, but some could get startled if a child runs at them. Likewise, your children may not be used to seeing dogs run around off leash. This is usually only an issue at a handful of city parks, which I've noted here.

SOUTH OF MARKET

The San Francisco Giants baseball organization took a lot of flack when it allowed the Coca-Cola Company to sponsor a play area behind the bleacher section at AT&T Park. The source of the local indignation was an 80-foot wooden Coca-Cola bottle. Despite the overt commercialism, it's still one nifty playground. The **Coca-Cola Fan Lot** (✆ **415/972-2000;** Willie Mays Plaza, 2nd and King sts.; N-Judah toward Cal Train Station) is



open to the public June to August daily from 10am to 4pm and weekends September to May from 10am to 4pm—when the team is out of to wn. On game days, it's open only to ticket holders. Entrance is free. That commotion-causing wooden bottle contains the most exciting sets of slides in town: two 56-foot-long curving slides and two 20-foot-long twisting slides. A 50-by-50-foot replica of the ballpark gives kids ages 3 to 7 an opportunity to play ball just like the big guys. Little sluggers can blast a homer off a batting tee, use the pitching machine, or hit off a pint-siz ed pitcher if one's available, while parents watch from the sidelines. Another section, a 45-foot base race fr om home to first, lets kids show off how much faster they run than their parents. There's also a speed pitch that times how fast your future MVPs can throw, a photo booth, and plaques etched with the signatures of past G iants that can be used to make r ubbings. In addition to all this fun, the Fan Lot has some of the best vie ws in town.

Just a bit do wn the E mbarcadero heading to ward the F erry B uilding, look for **South Beach P ark.** This toddler playgr ound is sunny , compact, and sw eet, and on game days you'll have the thrill of listening to the r oar of the cr owd. **Yerba Buena Gardens** (p. 163) is an exceptional urban par k and ar t center, and, along with its other attractions, ther e's a rooftop playground in the vicinity of the bo wling center/skating rink. This is no or dinary

playground. Besides some great slides, there's a bowl-shaped pit with a spongy surface and sloped walls that is great for climbing around, musical pipes, and other unique play items.

CHINATOWN

Willie Wong Playground (formerly "Chinese Playground") on Sacramento Street (btw. Stockton St. and Grant Ave.; ✆ **415/274-0202**) is a bi-level park built on the side of a hill. Although it doesn't have a lawn, it does house two outdoor sandboxes, game and sports fields, an indoor gym, and a recreation center.

Portsmouth Square, on top of Portsmouth Garage, is a regular stop on the Chinatown walking tour circuit. The sandy playground, suitable for kids under 7, is compact. There are plenty of benches, lots to look at—including locals practicing their tai chi moves—and larger-than-life views of the Financial District. It's also historic: This was the site of the city's first public school. Not far from there, at Grant Street, between Pine and California streets, **St. Mary's Square** is a pleasant spot with grass, benches, and a colorful play structure for toddlers.

NORTH BEACH

The **Joe DiMaggio North Beach Playground** (651 Lombard St., at Mason St.; ✆ **415/274-0201**) has a number of athletic facilities, including a pool area (with a lap pool and recreation pool with different water temperatures to accommodate a range of aquatic programs. Swimming rates were $4 for adults, $1 for kids under 17, $3 for seniors. The pool was closed for repairs as this went to press, but was expected to reopen soon. With a new locker facility and clubhouse, it's a good place to cool off. The area also has a playground (which was not updated), picnic tables, tennis courts, a basketball court, and even bocce ball courts.

Michelangelo Park (Greenwich St., btw. Leavenworth and Jones sts.) is a well-protected gem, almost hidden from view, which is actually very close to the crooked section of Lombard Street. Although it has a lovely lawn, I've never seen an off-leash dog here.

CIVIC CENTER & HAYES VALLEY

Famous for the Victorian row houses on Steiner Street known as the "Painted Ladies," **Alamo Square Park** (btw. Steiner, Scott, Hayes, and Fulton sts.) also features great views of downtown San Francisco. The park itself is small, only 4 square blocks, with a simple playground and a single tennis court. It's a meeting ground for neighborhood doggies.

After a trip to the Main Library, you could drop by the playground in **Civic Center Plaza** on McAllister Street and let the appropriate parties try out the new climbing structure. Unfortunately, you'll first want to check for vagrants.

THE MARINA & COW HOLLOW

For toddlers and younger children, the tiny **Cow Hollow Playground** ★ on Baker Street, between Greenwich and Union streets, is a lovely protected and enclosed area. A kids' art studio is also open most weekdays, except from 1 to 2pm.

The spacious, enclosed playground at the **Moscone Recreation Center** ★★★ (Chestnut and Laguna sts.; ✆ **415/292-2045**) has creative climbing structures, slides, swings, and old-style seesaws. In addition, there are basketball and tennis courts, baseball diamonds, putting greens, soccer fields, and a gym. On weekday mornings the gym is filled with preschoolers enjoying drop-in art or music classes. On school-year afternoons and weekends, the fields are busy with games. With all the kids here, dog owners do

generally keep their furry companions leashed. If the weather turns sour, you can seek cover next door at the San Francisco Public Library's Marina Branch, which has a terrific children's section and plenty of weekday kids' programs.

PACIFIC HEIGHTS

In the heart of the city's most expensive neighborhood you'll find two lovely, well-tended parks with city views and expansive lawns. With so much grass, both parks are popular with dogs and their human companions. Fortunately, the playareas are fenced in, so everyone gets along.

Alta Plaza Park ★★ (btw. Steiner, Scott, Clay, and Jackson sts.) is worth checking out for the city view alone, although the grass and trees are also delightful. Facilities include tennis and basketball courts. The entire playground reopened in the summer of 2006 after an extensive remodel, and now features every sort of climbing structure, swing, and slide a kid could want. When the breeze is blowing, this hilltop playground gets very windy.

Lafayette Park, between Gough, Sacramento, Laguna, and Washington streets, has walking paths, a fenced-in playground (with somewhat dated wooden structures), nice views, picnic tables, and tennis courts. It is also dog-friendly, with an unfenced dog run available.

THE PRESIDIO

The oldest continuously operated military garrison in the nation—until its decommissioning in 1989—the Presidio of San Francisco was transferred to the National Park Service in 1994. Because it must become financially self-sustaining by 2013, the 800 buildings on the site, which include historic residences, military barracks, and the 23-acre Letterman General Hospital (no longer operating as such), are undergoing careful redevelopment. At the same time, the Presidio Trust, which is planning and overseeing the transformation, is mindful of the role these 1,491 acres may play in the future of the community at large. The Presidio is filled with recreational resources. Start with a stop at the **Visitor Center** (✆ **415/561-4323**), open daily 9am to 5pm, which is currently located at 50 Moraga Ave. (at Arguello Blvd.). You can obtain a map of the Presidio and browse the books and Golden Gate National Parks Association (GGNPA) souvenirs. Rangers are often on hand to answer questions, and they regularly lead 1-hour walks. You can find a schedule of events on the Presidio Trust website, www.presidio.gov.

The grounds include 14 miles of bike paths, 11 miles of walking trails, a boardsailing and kite-surfing area at **Crissy Field,** beaches, picnicking facilities, a national cemetery, a pet cemetery, and a free shuttle service, PresidiGo, to help get you from here to there. **PresidiGo** operates weekdays from 6:30am to 7:30pm (departing every half-hour from the "Transit Center" at 215 Lincoln Blvd. near the post office) and weekends from 11am

Fun Facts A Little Park History

The Presidio was established by Spanish soldiers in 1776, the same year the United States of America became an official independent entity on the other side of the continent. Mexico took over the area in 1822, and in 1846 the U.S. army assumed control of the post.

Tips **Fun for a Crowd**

If you have a group of 10 or more people at your disposal, you can schedule a program or docent-led expedition, such as a bike tour of historical places, by phoning the Presidio's **Community Outreach Coordinator** at ✆ **415/561-4317.**

to 6pm (departing on the hour from the Transit Center), making 40 stops inside the Presidio. You can eat pretty well here during the day on weekdays: the **Acre Café** at the Thoreau Center (✆ **415/561-2273**), open weekdays 7am to 2:30pm, uses organic produce and free-range meats in its soups, salads, sandwiches, quesadillas, and specials. You can purchase organic, local, "made-from-scratch" breakfast and lunch goodies at **Dish** inside the San Francisco Film Centre near the Main Post (✆ **415/561-2336**); open weekdays 8am to 4pm. **Crissy Field Center** (✆ **415/561-7756**) has a cafe and operates the **Warming Hut** (✆ **415/561-3042**) on the west end of Crissy Field, both of which are open daily from 9am to 5pm.

On the southern side of the Presidio, just 4 blocks from Sacramento Street, is the ever-popular **Julius Kahn Park.** The lovely playground sits next to the trees and features state-of-the-art playground equipment you probably haven't seen anywhere else: round swings, oddly shaped seesaws, and so on. There are picnic facilities, restrooms, tennis and basketball courts, playing fields, and hiking paths into the Presidio. The most convenient bus, the no. 43-Masonic, takes you close, but not to, this spot. The no. 1-California also gets you within a few blocks of it.

THE CASTRO & NOE VALLEY

Dolores Park, an easy commute on the J-Church streetcar, commands the sort of view that on a sunny day convinces out-of-towners that they ought to move to the city. Its grassy slopes lure sunbathers and picnicking couples, and the rolling lawn attracts children's birthday parties and local doggies. With a mediocre playground and many off-leash dogs, this isn't the best play area for toddlers, but it is a good place for kids to stretch their legs after visiting Mission Dolores (p. 180).

Duboce Park, between Scott and Steiner streets, has state-of-the-art equipment: a climbing wall, slides, the whole bit. The N-Judah streetcar passes right by. At the southwest corner is the **Harvey Milk Recreation Center** (✆ **415/554-9523**), specializing in the arts. Closed for renovations and scheduled to reopen in April 2009, the center offers low-cost classes in dance, music, photography, and drama for adults and children as young as 6.

Douglass Playground, at Douglass and 27th streets in Noe Valley, has a large lawn, picnic tables, a sandy play structure, decent bathrooms, and a great big slide tucked into the hillside that borders the park. The hot new playground around here, the **Walter Haas Playground** (at Diamond Heights Blvd. and Addison St.), affords fabulous downtown views but is a bit out of the way for most tourists.

THE MISSION

Mission Playground, on 19th Street between Valencia and Linda streets (look for the mural), could be a handy park if you find yourself needing a play break while touring this neighborhood. The equipment is tops, and an unlocked gate ensures that off-leash dogs are not a problem. Other facilities include a recreation center and tennis courts.

Tips Getting the Scoop on Special Events

The Golden Gate National Parks Association (GGNPA) partners with the National Park Service to help maintain much of the public land on San Francisco's coastline. The GGNPA sponsors educational programs at various sites—including Crissy Field, the Presidio, Fort Point, China Beach, and Fort Funston—on a quarterly basis. You can plan ahead to join ranger-led walks, talks, and other programs, some specifically for families, by logging onto www.nps.gov/goga/parknews and downloading the latest "ParkNews" newsletter.

THE RICHMOND & SUNSET

Golden Gate Park, San Francisco's most famous public grounds, attracts more than 75,000 people on the weekends alone. The park is about 3 miles long (bigger than Manhattan's Central Park) and is best appreciated on foot or two wheels. If little legs are unable to travel the length of the park, don't worry: The California Academy of Sciences, de Young Museum, Conservatory of Flowers, and Korea Children's Corner, among the park's major highlights, are all within walking distance of each other. On weekends and holidays in the summer from 10am to 6pm, the free Golden Gate Park Shuttle runs at 15-minute intervals from McLaren Lodge on the eastern edge of Golden Gate Park to Ocean Beach, stopping at 15 locations in between. See p. 173 for more information on the park.

The lake in **Mountain Lake Park** was a 4-acre reservoir that provided San Francisco with water during the gold rush. Located on the edge of the Presidio Golf Course off Lake Street between 8th Avenue and Park Presidio Boulevard, this exceptional park is a great location for families with kids of all ages. There are two playgrounds, one more suitable for under-5s. Other facilities include basketball and tennis courts, playing fields, hiking trails, a small beach, and picnic tables. The no. 28L-19th Avenue bus drives by the park on its way into the Presidio.

In the inner Richmond, not far from Laurel Village, is **Rossi Pool and Playground** (Arguello Blvd. at Anza St.; ✆ **415/666-7014**). It's a nice pool at a bargain fee—$4 for adults, $1 for kids—with limited recreational swim hours, and the playground is big and well equipped. The park has tennis courts as well, making it a good destination for a variety of activities.

2 THE GREAT INDOORS

Gymboree **Ages infant to 4.** You may know it for the frilly kids' clothes, but Gymboree actually started 30 years ago as a play and music group for young children. Its popular 45-minute playgroup sessions led by a Gymboree instructor led to its bigger success in retail. Gymboree's weekly music and movement classes for babies and parents to do together are designed to follow the appropriate developmental sequence. If you're here for a longer stay, Gymboree classes are a great way to meet other moms and babies. The first class is free, and subsequent drop-in sessions are $25 per class.

1525 Sloat Blvd., near the San Francisco Zoo. ✆ **415/242-5637.** www.gymboreeclasses.com. Class times vary based on the age of your child; call for details.

Mission Cliffs ★★★ **Ages 6 and up.** This indoor climbing center provides 14,000 feet of wall to conquer for those days when just getting up in the morning doesn't cut it. If you sign up for the belay safety class (same-day registration at $28/person; only $20/person if you are getting a day pass as well), you'll get a day pass and equipment rental thrown in. Mission Cliffs also has a workout area with regular fitness equipment. Phone first to check on how busy the center is if you're arriving on a weekend. Kids love holding birthday parties here.

2295 Harrison St. (at 19th St.). ✆ **415/550-0515.** www.touchstoneclimbing.com. Day pass $10 kids 14 and under, $10 adults before 3pm on weekdays, $18 after 3pm and on weekends. Mon–Fri 6:30am–10pm; Sat–Sun 9am–7pm.

Peakadoodle Kids Club ★★ **All ages.** This option is best for families staying longer in San Francisco, since membership is required. Non-members may come only with a member, and their first visit is free; after that, it's $50 per visit. What members do get is access to several classes in music, baby and kids' yoga, art, cooking, sports, dance, science, baby signs, and so on for both kids and parents. There's a fitness center, cafe, and quiet lounge for parents who want some free time while their little ones are in class (parents must stay on the premises during classes).

900 North Point St. (btw. Polk and Larkin sts. In Ghirardelli Square). ✆ **415/440-7335.** http://peekadoodlekidsclub.com. Membership: $110/month. ($130 membership free, which may be waived for families only staying a short time in San Francisco). Mon–Fri 9:30am–6pm (Wed until 7pm); Sat 9:30am–4pm; Sun closed for parties and events.

Planet Granite ★★★ **Ages 6 and up.** Opened in 2008, this brand-new rock climbing facility has already become a favored destination of our 7-year-old daughter (who also is a big fan of Mission Cliffs, by the way). Located in an old hangar, the light-filled space overlooking Crissy Field and the bay beyond has two bouldering areas, a multi-sided climbing wall, and a fitness zone. In order to use the facility, you must take belay lessons (offered weekday evenings, except Wed, and throughout the day on weekends for $34/person) and pass the belay test. Parents must also sign a waiver for kids. Planet Granite rents all equipment needed.

924 old Mason St. (near Crissy Field Ave.). ✆ **415/550-0515.** http://planetgranite.com. Day pass: $18, $10 kids 13 and under, $13 weekdays before 1pm and for students Mon–Fri before 5pm, $4 for shoes or harness, $6 for shoes and harness. Basic rock climbing 4-week course: $110 members, $150 non-members. Mon–Fri 6am–11pm; Sat 8am–8pm; Sun 8am–6pm.

3 BEACHCOMBING

Warm, sunny days along San Francisco's coastline are rarities because the outer Richmond and Sunset neighborhoods are often the last to escape the fog. But when the sun does come out, the beaches are wonderful.

Be aware that the ocean is neither warm nor safe enough for swimming, and signs note that waders and swimmers have died at San Francisco beaches. For one, unpredictable "sneaker" waves, giant waves that form when two or three normal-sized waves merge, can suddenly sweep onto the shore. Also, having surfed at Ocean Beach a few times (and wondered what I've gotten myself into), I can attest to the incredible strength of the rip current. In fact, the last thing you should do is enter the water where you see surfers going in, since surfers usually look for a rip current that can carry them out with minimal paddling. That current could sweep out even a strong swimmer, who, without a wetsuit, would be quickly numbed by the extremely cold water.

Most of San Francisco's beaches don't have the facilities you'd find farther south in the state, such as snack shacks, showers, or even restrooms. But the dramatic pounding of the waves and the beauty of the jagged edges of the continent nonetheless lur e walkers, bicyclists, skaters, and families armed with buckets and sho vels to the beach—bundled up if necessary, but still managing to enjo y the sand and the scene.

The lengthiest stretch of sand is 4-mile-long **Ocean Beach** on the Great Highway. At one end is **Fort Funston** (p. 186), a former U.S. military reserve where explorers can still find the r emains of a cannon. F ort Funston is also the pr emier hang glider launch and landing site, and there's a viewing platform above the beach that provides the perfect spot to watch the action. Ar ound the end of Wawona Street, on the nor th side of the z oo, a bike/skate path extends parallel to Ocean Beach to Golden Gate Park. Ocean Beach ends near the Cliff House.

Heading nor th along the coastline, past Lincoln P ark, is shelter ed **China Beach.** Again, this is no place to swim, but the small beach has an observation deck overlooking the Pacific, grills for barbecuing, a grassy picnic ar ea, and bathr ooms. North of China Beach, and par t of the P residio, is mile-long **Baker Beach,** probably the most popular beach for families. Picnic tables are scattered among the cypress trees, the sand is inviting, and the bridge and Marin Headland views are inspiring. Look for **Battery Chamberlin,** built in 1904, which holds the last " disappearing gun" on the West Coast. D emonstrations on how it operates ar e given on the first full S aturday and Sunday of each month between 11am and 3pm. B e awar e that the nor thern tip of B aker B each is clothing optional—yes, there's a nude beach in San Francisco, which is surprising only because it gets so cold down there.

Inside the bay, the tiny beaches of **Crissy Field** are the best option for families with younger children, since they have almost no waves, and wading is possible on warm days. Just note that the bay curr ents are still fierce, and the water is v ery chilly. At the eastern end of Crissy Field, you'll find bathrooms and showers, while the western end has lovely picnic benches, restrooms, and the nearby Warming Hut, where you can purchase a tasty lunch to enjoy at the beach.

4 SPORTS & GAMES

ARCHERY

Golden Gate Park has an ar chery field with nine hay bales off F ulton Street above the golf course. (Two of the bales are wheelchair accessible.) You can rent archery equipment at the nearby **San Francisco Archery Shop** (3795 Balboa St., at 39th Ave.; ✆ **415/751-2776**) for $25 for the day; for gr oups of three or more, rental rates are $20 for the day. This includes a lesson if you'd like. The bows are lightweight enough for kids 8 and up.

BASEBALL

In the spring, teams are organized and coached through the Youth Athletics office of the **Recreation & P ark D epartment** (✆ 415/831-6318; www.parks.sfgov.org), the **Police Activities League** (✆ 415/401-4666; www.sfpal.org), the **Jewish Community Center** (✆ 415/346-6040; www.jccsf.org), **SF Youth Sports** (✆ 415/409-6884; www.sfyouthsports.com), and **Little League Baseball** (✆ 415/263-0510; www.littleleague.org).

BASKETBALL

The **Nate Thurmond Courts** on the Panhandle, a narrow stretch of green between Oak and Fell streets on the eastern edge of Golden Gate Park, are the site of some regular and lively pickup games. If you want to shoot some hoops to keep your game up, check the park listings above for centers with basketball courts. You can also phone the **Embarcadero YMCA** (✆ **415/957-9622;** www.ymcasf.org/embarcadero) about open-court play, or check with the **Presidio YMCA** (✆ **415/447-9602;** www.ymcasf.org/presidio) about its Saturday night pickup games and youth programs. The **Recreation and Park Department, Police Activities League, Jewish Community Center,** and **SF Youth Sports** (see "Baseball" listing, above) field teams, and **City College of San Francisco** (✆ **415/239-3401;** www.ccsf.edu) offers summer basketball camps for kids aged 5 to 14.

BIKING

On Sundays, **Golden Gate Park** is closed to automobile traffic, as bikes and bicyclists of all sizes arrive in force, ready to pedal around the park's 7 miles of paved bike paths or take to the streets. On other days, two-wheelers need to pay some attention to the automobile traffic, but in general, drivers behave somewhat reasonably inside the park. Another popular route for bikes is the **Embarcadero,** which is flat and as scenic as can be. You can ride from AT&T Park all the way to the Golden Gate Bridge, with side trips in the Presidio. The bike paths at Crissy Field and Ocean Beach are also a pleasure. Helmets are recommended for adults and required by law for kids under 18. Bike maps are available from the San Francisco Visitor Information Center at 900 Market St. (at Powell St.) for $3 and at bike shops around town. Politically active bicyclists can join a Critical Mass ride (a group of cycling advocates) on the last Friday of the month at the Embarcadero BART station at 5:30pm.

Bike Rentals

Avenue Cyclery This place offers bike sales and rentals convenient to Golden Gate Park. Rental rates are $8 per hour or $30 per day. 756 Stanyan St. ✆ **415/387-3155.** www.avenuecyclery.com.

Bike and Roll ★ In addition to renting cycles ($7–$10/hour or $27–$43/day, depending on how fancy a bike you rent), Bike and Roll gives you the info you need to take self-guided tours to Muir Woods National Park, Mt. Tamalpais, or even the popular ride to Sausalito with a return by ferry. Less ambitious, but still scenic, options include cycling through a few of San Francisco's lovely in-city parks. 899 Columbus Ave. ✆ **415/229-2000.** www.bikeandroll.com.

Bike Hut The laid-back staff at this nonprofit bike rental unit is expert at bike and wheelchair repair and can discuss the best bike routes. Bike rentals are $5 per hour and $20 per day. Styles include basic mountain bikes and seven-speed cruisers. Child seats and trailers are available. The equipment is used and looks it, but everything is serviceable. A decent public bathroom is nearby. Pier 40 (end of Townsend St. at Embarcadero). ✆ **415/543-4335.** www.thebikehut.com.

Blazing Saddles ★★ If you're wavering about a bike trip across the bay, the folks at any of five North Beach and Fisherman's Wharf locations of this experienced bike rental company will provide you with the information and encouragement—including ferry tickets for the return to San Francisco—that you'll need to tackle this route. (If you return late on the ferry, you can drop off bikes at the 24-hr. Hyde St. location.) The bikes, for kids as young as age 5 to adults, are well maintained. Rental prices ($7/hr. and $28/day,

or up to $68/day for a tricked-out racing bike) include helmets, locks, front packs, rear racks, maps, and advice. Tandem bikes, high-end road bikes, and full suspension mountain bikes rent for $11 per hour or $48 per day. Add-on tandems, kids' trailers, and baby seats are an additional $20 per day. 1095 Columbus Ave., 2715 Hyde St., 465 Jefferson St., Pier 43½, and Pier 41. ✆ **415/202-8888.** www.blazingsaddles.com.

Wheel Fun Rentals ★★ This national chain of wheeled rental vehicles has a location by the Stow Lake boathouse in Golden Gate Park. In addition to mountain bikes for $8/hr., $20/half-day, or $25/day, you can rent tandem bikes ($12/hr., $28/half-day, or $40/day), scooters for $5/hour, beach cruisers for $6/hour, and low-rider "choppers" or sport bikes for $10/hour. Other fun options are the single-bench or double-bench covered, carriage-like "Surrey" bikes for $20 or $30 an hour. 50 Stow Lake Dr. in Golden Gate Park. ✆ **415/668-6699.** www.wheelfunrentals.com.

BOATING

It's an absolute joy for kids to steer a boat on Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park. **Stow Lake Boathouse** (✆ **415/752-0347**) provides the basics in watercraft. Rowboats are $19 per hour, pedal boats are $24 per hour. It's cash only, on a first-come, first-served basis; open daily from 10am to 4pm. Someone over 16 must be on the boat at all times. Prepare the kids to get a bit damp.

If you'd like to get out on the bay, bay tours—complete with audio guides—depart frequently from Fisherman's Wharf operated by the **Blue & Gold Fleet** (✆ **415/773-1188;** www.blueandgoldfleet.com) and the **Red and White Fleet** (✆ **415/673-2900;** www.redandwhite.com).

If sailing is your thing, be sure to check out **Saillola.com** (✆ **415/573-7030;** www.saillola.com). Costing $125/hour on weekdays and $150/hour on weekends, *Lola* fits six passengers, kids are welcome, and you can bring whatever food and drink you'd like. For larger groups, Captain Jordan can also take your group out on the *Adventure Cat* or *Adventure Cat II,* the largest sailing catamarans on San Francisco Bay.

Alternatively, **Cass Marina** at 1702 Bridgeway in Sausalito (✆ **800/472-4595** or 415/332-6789; www.cassmarina.com) is a certified sailing school renting 22- to 35-foot sailboats, with prices ranging from $119 for a sunset cruise to $450 for an all-day excursion on the largest boat. Skippered charters are more expensive. Large sailing yachts also leave Sausalito on a regularly scheduled basis, so check the website.

BOWLING

Yerba Buena Bowling Center (✆ **415/820-3532;** www.skatebowl.com), at Yerba Buena Gardens, is the most convenient location. It's open daily 10am to 10pm (until midnight Fri–Sat), and game rates range from $4.50 to $7. **Presidio Bowl** near the Main Post inside the Presidio (corner of Moraga Ave. and Montgomery St.; ✆ **415/561-2695**) is an especially quaint bowling alley. The site of some memorable birthday parties, it's a little 12-alley pin palace with a snack bar selling pizza, beer, and sodas. Bumper bowling, with frustration-proof guardrails to cover the gutters, is an option. Open daily from 9am until midnight weeknights and 9am to 2am on weekends, this is such a popular hangout, especially on weekends, so phone ahead. Rates are $4.25 per game for adults and $3.25 per game for kids before 5pm. After 5pm, rates are $5.50 per game on weeknights and $6.50 per game on weekends—for both adults and kids. Shoe rentals are $4. The no. 29-Sunset-Letterman bus will get you there. (***Note:*** As of this writing, the Presidio Bowl's lease was extended only through January 2009, but residents hope they can persuade the Presidio Trust to keep the bowling center open.)

DANCING

Although you'll find a variety of dance classes for little ones at places like the Presidio Dance Theater, Stardance, City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Shan-Yee Poon Ballet School, and the Jewish Community Center, these are all for multi-week sessions. Your best bet for drop-in classes is the **Cheryl Burke Dance Center,** 1830 17th St. (✆ **415/252-9000;** www.cherylburkedance.com), although the classes aren't strictly geared for kids. Wednesdays at 7, 7:45, and 8pm you can take drop-in salsa classes, and Friday nights the center offers a variety of drop-in dance classes, including Argentine tango, swing, ballroom dancing, and salsa, which are followed by a dance party serving only snacks and nonalcoholic drinks.

FISHING

You'll find fly-casting pools at Golden Gate Park, on the western side of the Polo Fields, but you need to bring your own equipment unless you're content just to watch the regulars. **Hi's Tackle Box** at 3141 Clement St. (btw. 32nd and 33rd aves.; ✆ **415/221-3825;** www.histacklebox.com) is considered the best store in the Bay Area for any equipment fresh- and salt-water fishing enthusiasts may need.

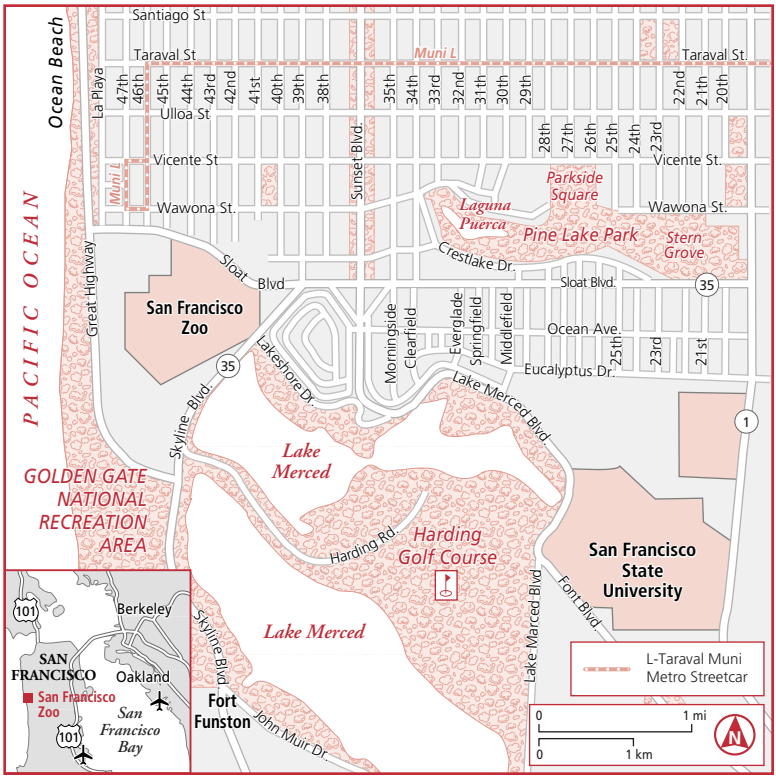
Sportfishing boats leave from Pier 41 (btw. Jones and Taylor sts.) every morning around 6am on half- and full-day trips for salmon, shark, or whatever happens to be running. Each boat captain works independently, but you can get pricing and an overview of the fleet at www.sfsportfishing.com. Of note is the *Lovely Martha* Sportfishing Charters (✆ **650/871-1691;** www.lovelymartha.com), run by three generations of the same family. Boats can be chartered for deep-sea fishing, San Francisco Bay fishing, sightseeing, or parties.

GOLFING

San Francisco boasts several excellent public courses. **Golden Gate Park Municipal Golf Course,** built in 1950, is the best choice for beginners. It's a 9-hole course with a narrow, tree-lined fairway. The clubhouse is located between JFK Drive and Fulton Street near 47th Avenue (✆ **415/751-8987;** www.goldengateparkgolf.com), and boasts a new restaurant serving Memphis-style barbecue. Greens fees are $14 for 9 holes ($4 for kids under 17) and $28 for 18 holes Monday to Thursday; Friday to Sunday, it's $19 for 9 holes ($6 for kids) and $38 for 18 holes. Club rentals and kids' classes are available. Advance tee times are not accepted.

Built in 1895 for the exclusive use of the military, **Presidio Golf Course,** off the Park Presidio Boulevard entrance at 300 Finley Rd. (✆ **415/561-4663;** www.presidiogolf.com), is currently the most popular public course in the city. Golfers were ecstatic when the army turned over that part of the Presidio to civilian use. Lined by eucalyptus and Monterey pine trees, its challenging 18 holes are played much of the year in foggy and windy conditions. Tee times may be reserved 30 days in advance, either online or by phoning central reservations at (✆ **415/561-4653**). Greens fees vary widely—from $39 to $132 depending on time and day of the week—and are cheaper for Bay Area residents and kids under 18. Club rental is available, and there's a driving range and restaurant.

Farther west is the most beautiful of the public courses, **Lincoln Park** (300 34th Ave.; ✆ **415/221-9911**), which boasts exceptional views of the Golden Gate Bridge from its perch on the edge of the coast. Built in 1908, this hilly, par-68 course has 18 holes that sit amidst Monterey cypress and pine trees. Facilities include club rental and a restaurant. Arrange tee times by calling ✆ **415/750-4653** 6 days in advance. Greens fees, which were recently $31 to $35, were being revised at press time.



Just minutes from the San Francisco Zoo are Lake Merced and the **Harding Park Golf Course** (99 Harding Rd., on Lake Merced Blvd. behind San Francisco State University; ✆ **415/664-4690;** http://harding-park.com). Opened in 1930, the course has a regulation 18-hole course of flat, tree-lined fairways, plus a 9-hole executive course, a driving range, and a restaurant. The course underwent a $16-million restoration in 2003 and hosted the 2005 PGA World Golf Championships. Greens fees are $45 to $155 (less for Bay Area residents and juniors 17 and under) and may be booked up to 7 days in advance by calling ✆ **415/750-4653.** A limited number of reservations can be made 8 to 30 days in advance, for an additional $10 per player, by calling the pro shop directly. You can also walk on to the 9-hole **Fleming Course** next door, which charges $25 to $30 greens fees.

South of downtown is John McLaren Park, home of **Gleneagles Golf Course** (2100 Sunnydale Ave.; ✆ **415/587-2425;** www.gleneaglesgolfsf.com). The well-maintained, challenging 9-hole course features hilly fairways and has a reputation for being windy. Weekend tee times may be reserved 7 days in advance. Greens fees are $15 to $19 for 9 holes and $23 to $31 for 18 holes. McLaren Park is on the border of San Francisco and San Mateo counties, in a less-than-stellar neighborhood.

GYMNASTICS

There are three gymnastics studios in town, all with classes for young kids and a rigorous training program. Out in the Sunset, **American Gymnastics** (2520 Judah St.; ✆ **415/731-1400;** www.americangymnasticsclub.com) offers an open gym night, Kids Night Out, on the last Saturday of the month from 6 to 9pm. The cost for nonmembers is $20; kids age 5 and up are welcome.

The staff at **AcroSports** (639 Frederick St.; ✆ **415/665-2276;** www.acrosports.org), which is near the southeast corner of Golden Gate Park, teaches classes in circus arts, dance, physical performance skills, and gymnastics, with programs for kids as young as 18 months. Former and current visiting gymnasts with an urge to swing on the uneven parallel bars can attend classes as drop-ins. You must call in advance to attend a class within the appropriate age group and skill level. Fees are $15 for a 1-hour class. Adult classes are also available; in any event, parents must accompany kids in order to sign the waiver form.

If you know locals who are members at **San Francisco Gymnastics** (920 Mason St.; ✆ **415/561-6260;** www.sanfranciscogymnastics.com), you can be guests at their monthly Parents Night Out program. Parents drop off their kids aged 4 to 12 at 5:30pm and return by 9:30pm. SF Gymnastics provides a pizza dinner, coloring, an obstacle course, gymnastics events, and an animated movie. Parent's Night Out is scheduled at least one Saturday a month, and registration is required by the Wednesday prior to the event. The fee is $25 for the first child and $20 for each additional sibling.

HIKING

You'll find plenty of hikes perfect for little legs in the Presidio, Golden Gate Park, and, our personal favorite, at Land's End (just make sure your kids stay close, as the trail hugs a cliff). For more ambitious hikes, head to Marin, where you'll find excellent, scenic trails on Mount Tamalpais, the Marin Headlands, and in Muir Woods. Hiking on **Angel Island** (p. 156) is also a treat—although a fire in late 2008 burned much of the island's vegetation. San Francisco Bay Area Hiker offers a good website (www.bahiker.com) for planning hikes in the city.

HORSEBACK RIDING

With the closure of the stables in Golden Gate Park, horseback riding in the city became a memory. Determined riders must now leave the city. One option is to cross the bridge to **Miwok Livery Stables** (✆ **415/383-8048;** www.miwokstables.com) in Mill Valley. Trail ride lessons for kids 12 and up are available Monday through Saturday, starting at 1:30pm with a half-hour safety lesson, followed by an hour ride through the beautiful Tennessee Valley hills, all for $75 per person. Reservations are required. Scheduled lessons for children starting at age 3 are also available.

Another option is to head 1 mile south from San Francisco Zoo. The **Mar Vista Stable** (2152 Skyline Blvd., Daly City; ✆ **650/991-4224;** http://marvistastable.tripod.com) offers guided rides on Ocean Beach. It is open from 9am to 5pm on weekdays and from 9am to 6pm on weekends, and no reservations are required. One-hour rides are $40, 1½-hour rides are $50, and 2-hour rides for $60 are available only until noon. A 10-minute pony ride on a carousel is $10.

ICE SKATING

Year-round ice skating is available at the 32,000-square-foot **Yerba Buena Ice Skating Rink** at Yerba Buena Gardens (✆ **415/820-3532;** www.skatebowl.com). Admission is

$6.25 for kids under 13, $8 for adults, and $5.50 for seniors 55 and up, with skate rentals adding $3 to the admission fee. Every year, from the second Wednesday in November until January 2, a portion of Justin Herman Plaza across from the Ferry Building turns into the **Holiday Ice Rink at the Embarcadero Center** (✆ **415/837-1931;** www.embarcaderocenter.com). Skating sessions are 90 minutes long and cost $8 for adults and $4.50 for kids before 6pm. After 6pm, prices increase to $8.50 for adults and $5.50 for kids. Skate rental is an additional $3, and small sizes are available. The rink opens at 10am daily and is open until 10pm Sunday to Thursday and until 11:30pm Friday and Saturday. Bring extra socks and have some gloves if possible, as it can get chilly out there. Expect crowds as well, which makes skating on the smallish rink a little intense at times if you're unsteady on your blades. The outdoor setting is really lovely, especially in the evening when the tall Embarcadero Center buildings are lit.

2008 saw the first **Holiday Ice Rink in Union Square** (✆ **415/781-2688;** www.unionsquareicerink.com), running from mid-November until early January, Sunday through Thursday from 10am to 10pm, and weekend nights until 11:30pm. Rates are the same as at the Embarcadero Center rink. You can also ice skate at the **San Francisco Zoo** (✆ **415/753-7080;** www.sfzoo.org) from late November until New Year's Day. Skating is $5 if you bring your own skates; special skating and rental packages combined with zoo admission are also available.

IN-LINE SKATING/ROLLER SKATING

On Sundays in Golden Gate Park at 6th Avenue and Fulton Street, skaters congregate for a hugely entertaining dance party from around noon to 5pm. The music is hip-shaking and the participants amazing in their skill on wheels. If you and the kids want to skate in the park, **Golden Gate Park Bike & Skate** on Fulton Street between 6th and 7th avenues (✆ **415/668-1117;** www.goldengateparkbikeandskate.com) rents skates as small as kids' size 10 for $5 an hour or $20 per day. In-line skates are $6 an hour or $24 per day. Safety equipment is included in the rental. **Bike and Roll** rents skates from its Fisherman's Wharf location at 353 Jefferson St. (see contact info under "Biking," above) for $5 for 2 hours, with a 2-hour minimum, or $25 per day. They carry a variety of sizes, including skates for the littlest rollers.

JUGGLING & FLYING TRAPEZE

San Francisco is home to the **Circus Center** (755 Frederick St.; ✆ **415/759-8123;** www.circuscenter.org), the premier training ground for circus arts in the U.S. Classes in such disciplines as Chinese acrobatics, hand-balancing, clowning, and flying trapeze are available for students age 5 and up. Classes may be available for drop-ins, but the center recommends calling ahead of time to check availability and rates. The center is across the street from Kezar Pavilion at the southeast corner of Golden Gate Park.

KAYAKING

A memorable way to get as close to the bay as possible without actually getting in is by skimming the surface in a kayak. At **City Kayak** (Embarcadero at Townsend; ✆ **415/357-1010** or 415/850-9971; http://citykayak.web.aplus.net), kayaks rent for $15 per person per hour (kids under 8 free; 15% discounts for students). If you plan to explore the bay on your own, every member of your party must be at least 5 feet tall. City Kayak will permit small kayakers in your group if you hire one of their professional guides at $80 per hour, for a minimum of 2 hours. Tours depart from South Beach or PIER 39.

Across the bridge, **Sea Trek,** on Schoonmaker Point near the Bay Model in Sausalito (✆ **415/488-1000** or 415/332-4465; www.seatrekkayak.com), kids as young as 6 can join their parents in a two- or three-person kayak and Sea Trek personnel will join you on Sunday family tours around Sausalito, Angel Island, or in Tomales Bay. The cost runs from $65 to $75 for adults and $30 to $45 for kids 12 and under. Alternatively, rental rates for are $20/hour for single kayaks and $35/hour for double kayaks. Phone for details.

KITE FLYING

The Marina Green is one of the best places to fly a kite anywhere. On most windy afternoons, you'll see an impressive array of multi-colored stunt kites, complemented by the breathtaking bay and bridge views. Unfortunately, there is no place to rent kites, but you should be able to find one to buy that will fit in your suitcase when it's time to head home. The Warming Hut in Crissy Field sells smallish kites, or you could pick one up at the Chinatown Kite Shop (p. 245). (Although the Safeway supermarket across the street from the Marina Green ought to sell kites, don't waste your time asking. They don't.)

If you are really into kiting, then you may want to head east across the bay. The Berkeley Marina's Cesar Chavez Park is world renowned for kite flying, and hosts the international Berkeley Kite Festival (✆ **415/235-5483;** www.highlinekites.com) for two days in July.

SKATEBOARDING

San Francisco remains a renowned skateboarding destination—despite the city's serious efforts recent years to get skaters off the streets. San Francisco even has a skateboarding task force. Why the city considers young teens getting exercise a problem is unclear. It did create a 150-square-foot skate park in Crocker Amazon Park, but it's practically in San Mateo County: No self-respecting skateboarder uses it. In 2008, the city inaugurated the Potrero del Sol Skate Park (at 25th and Utah sts.); Mayor Gavin Newsom attended the opening event. The new park has been well received by skateboarders, but it's in a sketchy neighborhood. Frankly, some skaters still prefer public streets. While Pier 7 had been thoroughly "skate-stopped" (filled in with bumps and ridges on the ledges, stairs, and any other slide-able surface), you can still find plenty of skaters doing tricks in the plaza in front of the Ferry Building. Skaters can also be found, in the wee hours of the night, at Union Square and at 3rd and Army streets.

SKIING & SNOWBOARDING

With world-class skiing just a few hours' drive away, it's no wonder so many Bay Area residents are avid skiers. The biggest resorts are **Squaw Valley** (✆ **530/583-6985;** www.squaw.com) on Lake Tahoe's north shore and **Heavenly** (✆ **775/586-7000;** www.skiheavenly.com) on the south side. Other good, medium-sized ski resorts include **Northstar-at-Tahoe** (✆ **800/466-6784;** www.skinorthstar.com), east of Tahoe City, and **Sugarbowl** (✆ **530/426-9000;** www.sugarbowl.com), off Highway 80 a good half-hour closer to San Francisco than most Tahoe resorts.

If you are traveling with kids who don't need to ski double black-diamond slopes, consider some of the smaller, truly family-oriented ski areas. Lift tickets are cheaper, and the overall feel is more personal. **Tahoe Donner** (✆ **530/587-9400;** www.tahoedonner.com) is a quaint, family-oriented resort northwest of Lake Tahoe, and, on the Nevada side, petite **Mt. Rose** (✆ **800/754-7673;** www.mtrose.com) is one of our favorite mountains—combining a laid-back attitude and kid-friendly slopes with a few steep runs

for mom and dad. Lastly, **Kirkwood Mountain Resort** (✆ **209/258-6000;** www.kirkwood.com) usually has the most snow and can be reached (when the road is open) via an alternative route (Hwy. 88) to ever-jammed Highway 80.

Most of the resorts offer ski school for children 4 and up, as well as day care for kids 3 and up, and many will give babysitting referrals for under 3s. Just note that every Friday evening (even in the summer) Highway 80 is clogged with vacationers heading to the mountains. If at all possible, drive up mid-week.

If it's cross-country skiing or snowshoeing you're interested in, visit the lovely **Clair Tappaan Lodge** (✆ **800/679-6775** or 530/426-3632; www.ctl.sierraclub.org) in the Donner Summit area west of Lake Tahoe. Other options in the Sierra Nevada are **Royal Gorge** (✆ **800/500-3871** or 530/426-3661; http://royalgorge.com) and **Granlibakken** (✆ **877/552-6301;** www.granlibakken.com).

SOCCER

Drive by the Marina Green or through Golden Gate Park on a weekday afternoon or Saturday morning: The number of kids running after soccer balls is dizzying. Soccer is hugely popular in San Francisco, with teams organized by the **Recreation and Park Department,** the **Jewish Community Center, SF Youth Sports,** and the **San Francisco Police Activities League** (see contact info listed under "Baseball," earlier in this chapter). Soccer classes for the preschool set are offered by **Soccer Kids Inc.** (✆ **415/608-2608;** www.soccerkids.com), while older kids can contact the **Presidio YMCA** (✆ **415/447-9622;** www.ymcasf.org/presidio). The **San Francisco Viking Youth Soccer League** (✆ **415/504-8131;** www.sfvikings.com) is one of the country's oldest leagues for youth soccer and organizes many of the games you're likely to see on any given weekend. The **San Francisco Seals** soccer teams offers Seals Junior Academy clinics and camps for kids up to age 14 (send questions to **sfseals@gmail.com**; www.oursfseals.com).

SURFING

Fifteen minutes south of San Francisco on Highway 1 is the tiny burg of Pacifica, a popular spot for many Bay Area surfers. **Surf Camp Pacifica** (✆ **650/245-2924;** www.surfpacifica.com) at Linda Mar Beach runs 3-hour surf camps for kids 6 to 18 that run from 2 to 5 days, with rates from $140 to $270, including wetsuit rentals for $10 to $20. Linda Mar Beach has clean restrooms and showers, but the grayish-sand beach doesn't rank among Northern California's loveliest. It's best left to surfers and dog-walkers. **Adventure Out** (✆ **800/509-3954;** www.adventureout.com) also offers surfs clinics and private lessons at Linda Mar in Pacifica, at Half Moon Bay, and in Santa Cruz for kids, teens, and adults. The basic class includes 3 hours of lessons and all gear for $95.

On most days, you're likely to see several surfers at Ocean Beach as well. However, with its strong current; steep, powerful waves; and icy-cold waters, Ocean Beach is suitable only for advanced surfers. I've seen kids surfing there only on summer days (the swell is usually not as strong in summer) when the waves were very, very small—and even then they were over 12 years old. Exercise caution: An inexperienced surfer disappeared here in 2006.

SWIMMING

The city's Recreation & Park Department maintains swimming pools in a handful of recreation centers. The cost to swim is modest—$4 for adults and $1 for children, or $5 for a family of four. Public swim times vary from pool to pool and are limited; call or drop by the centers to note times and days. Two of the best swimming pools are at the

Joe DiMaggio North Beach Playground at Lombard and Mason streets (✆ **415/274-0200**) and **Rossi Pool and Playground** (Arguello Blvd. at Anza St.; ✆ **415/666-7014**). The **Embarcadero YMCA** (169 Steuart St.; ✆ **415/957-9622;** www.ymcasf.org/embarcadero) and the **Presidio YMCA** (Letterman Pool, 1151 Gorgas Ave.; ✆ **415/447-9622;** www.presidioymcaaquatics.org) both have large indoor pools, and if you are a YMCA member in your hometown, you can use their facilities for $3. Nonmembers are charged $12 per day at the Presidio pool and $15 at the Embarcadero location. Call in advance to check on community swim hours and to be sure swim lanes are available.

Over at the University of San Francisco campus on Turk and Parker streets near Laurel Heights is the **Koret Health and Recreation Center** (✆ **415/422-6811;** www.usfca.edu/koret). It's primarily for students and locals, but nonmembers may use the Olympic-size indoor swimming pool on a drop-in basis for $15 per person. Swim teams regularly practice in the pool Monday to Thursday afternoons; weekends and mornings are the best times for casual use. As with most pools in town, kids must be accompanied by adults. The **University of California, San Francisco** (UCSF) campuses at 500 Parnassus Ave. and Mission Bay (at 16th and 3rd sts.) both have pools with drop-in rates of $15 for adults and $7 per child. The Mission Bay Community Center has a warm indoor pool and a 25-yard, cool outdoor lap pool (✆ **415/502-4446;** http://campuslifeservices.ucsf.edu/fitnessrecreation).

TENNIS

The San Francisco Recreation and Park Department operates 132 free tennis courts at parks and recreation centers spread throughout the city. Most are available to players on a first-come, first-served basis. Additionally, the 21 courts in **Golden Gate Park Tennis Complex** can be reserved in advance for a nominal fee. Reservations for weekends are taken starting the previous Wednesday for the upcoming week by calling ✆ **415/753-7131.** Reservation fees for walk-ups are $4 weekdays ($2 for seniors and free kids under 18) and $5 weekends; $6 for advanced requests. Hopefully you're planning on playing with a local, because proof of residency is a requirement to use the courts at peak times. Otherwise, feel free to try the courts at the Moscone Recreation Center, Dolores Park, Alta Plaza Playground, the Presidio, Joe DiMaggio North Beach Playground, and so on. City residents (kids and grown-ups) have the pleasure of signing up for free tennis classes offered through the Recreation and Park Department at courts throughout San Francisco.

WINDSURFING/SAILBOARDING

Before Crissy Field was converted into a national park, windsurfers from around the Bay Area would descend on the abandoned military airstrip and begin setting up their equipment. Now that it's a lovely recreation area, the eastern end of Crissy Field is even more popular as an access point to some of the best windsurfing in northern California. Since then, kite-boarding has exploded in popularity. Most afternoons you'll see at least a dozen windsurfers and kite-boarders in the water, and on the windiest days you'll see hundreds. Watching the boarders attain death-defying velocities while towering cargo ships loom in the background is a heart-stopping spectacle. This challenging spot is for experts only; no lessons are available here. **Boardsports Windsurfing & Kiteboarding School** (✆ **15/385-1224;** http://boardsportsschool.com) rents gear from their San Francisco location at 1200 Clay St. However, lessons are offered out of their San Mateo or Alameda branches.

5 CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

Perfect for a rainy day or a time when you want a low-key activity, hands-on craft shops provide space and equipment for customers to create something useful to take home or wrap up for Grandma. Finding half-day or full-day workshops, on the other hand, is more challenging. Most of the many music, dance, art, and sports classes in the city require time commitments from 4 weeks to the rest of your life. Below are a few options that are available on a one-time basis. For more information, visit www.gocitykids.com and www.gokids.org.

ART CLASSES

Over at Fort Mason Center in the Marina is **San Francisco Children's Art Center** (Building C; ✆ **415/771-0292;** www.childrensartcenter.org), with a full schedule of classes for kids from 2 to 10 years old. The center is open every day, and for $20 to $28 kids are allowed to join classes on a drop-in basis. Phone for a schedule or check the website. Another local art center for kids is **Purple Crayon** (301 Cornwall St., at California St. and 4th Ave.; ✆ **415/831-0693;** www.purplecrayon.com). Weekdays from 3 to 6pm and Wednesday mornings from 10am to noon are "open studio" hours for kids of all ages for $10 per child. At other times, kids may drop in on classes if there is availability. Call ahead to inquire.

Destination Art (900 Filbert St., ✆ **415/350-4396;** www.destinationartsf.com) is a lovely place for drop-in classes or summer and holidays art camps. The first and third Fridays of the month are movie night, from 6:30 to 9pm. Drop your child off for arts, crafts, and a film screening for just $15. Every Saturday afternoon between 1 and 4pm at the **Randall Museum** (p. 267), some sort of art project is on hand for kids. Past crafts have included mask making, decorating paper lanterns, creating a Zen rock garden, and making a snow globe. Cost is minimal; $3 for kids or $5 for an adult/child combo. Saturdays are also great at the **de Young Museum** (p. 179), where guides lead tours of current exhibitions, followed by studio workshops taught by professional artist-teachers. The program, free after paid admission, is from 10:30am to noon for all visitors and 1:30 to 3pm for museum members. It's appropriate for kids ages 3 to 12, although children under 8 must be accompanied by an adult.

Other San Francisco museums offering art classes are the **SFMOMA** (p. 182), which the third Sunday of every month offers a special family studio featuring hands-on projects for kids and docent-led tours, and the Contemporary Jewish Museum, which offers drop-in art classes on Sundays from 1 to 3pm. The **Cartoon Art Museum** (p. 179) also has occasional cartooning workshops for older kids, and the **Museum of the African Diaspora** (p. 180) hosts a family day on the third Saturday of the month, featuring art projects inspired by current exhibits.

COOKING

Apron Strings **Ages 10 and up.** Conceived and run by Roberta Des Bouillons, an alumna of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, Apron Strings offers weekly cooking sessions for children. You can also reserve a spot in the 3-hour Saturday morning workshops, which run from 9am to noon and cost $65. Classes cover everything from Italian cooking, cake baking, and pie making to seasonal soups and ethnic delights.The morning ends with students (and parents) sharing the fruits of their labors. 1187 Franklin St. (at Geary St.) in the First Universalist Unitarian Church. ✆ **415/550-7976.** www.apronstringssf.com.

San Francisco Center for the Book The focus here is on traditional book arts, including printing, using natural materials, binding, and so on. The center hosts occasional Family Book Making Days, geared for kids aged 4 to 12 and their parents, include easy and educational book projects. 300 De Haro St., between 16th and 17th sts. ✆ **415/565-0545.** www.sfcb.org.

Terra Mia **Ages 4 and up.** Pick the type of pottery object you want to paint—be it a picture frame, serving dish, or toothbrush cup—then pick your paints, and see what comes of it. The store will need a few days to fire the item in the kiln for you. 1314 Castro St., at 24th St. ✆ **415/642-9911.** www.terramia.net.

9

Shopping with Your Kids

Shopping and kids don't always go together. Some kids get hives at the mere mention of the word. Others love shopping—as long as you're shopping for them. In the case of little ones, an entire shopping excursion may be spent chasing giggling kids out from behind the clothes racks.

But we all need to buy stuff and sometimes it's inevitable that we'll have the kids in tow when we do so. Successful shopping with children calls for teamwork, moderation, give-and-take, and a flexible attitude. If there's something you really need to buy—like a present for the neighbor who's watering your plants while you're away—let the kids in on it and have them help you with the project. Also, keep shopping trips short and strike a bargain with the little ones. For my children, a trip to the boutiques on Fillmore or Chestnut streets means they get to stop at Jamba Juice, and an excursion to the Westfield San Francisco Centre comes with a (quick) visit to the Sanrio Store. If there's something small you can buy for your children, they'll feel the shopping excursion was intended for them as well. Lastly, be prepared to take a break if the kids have run out of steam.

Fortunately, San Francisco has plenty of stores that kids will enjoy checking out as much as their parents. And for those moments when everyone's had enough, there are always nearby parks or cafes where you can have a rest or a snack.

1 THE SHOPPING SCENE

San Francisco is a terrific place to shop. Those who enjoy leisurely perusing boutiques to find unique treasures can enjoy the city's amazing collection of locally owned stores selling everything from distinctive clothes, toys, and gifts, to one-of-a-kind books, art, and housewares. For others who prefer convenience and known brands, the Union Square area is a shopper's paradise.

Most independent stores in neighborhood shopping districts like Chestnut, Fillmore, and 24th streets are open from 10am to 6 or 7pm Monday through Saturday and from noon to 5 or 6pm on Sundays, although larger chain stores may stay open later. Downtown, department stores and major retailers are open longer hours, with Macy's, Nordstrom, and Bloomingdale's open until 9pm every night but Sunday. If you plan to visit a particular store in the evening or on a Sunday, call to make sure it will be open.

California has a **sales tax** of 8.5% that's added at the register. Purchases shipped out of state by the store are not taxable, but the shipping charges may come to more than the taxes unless you're buying a very expensive item.

THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Union Square/Financial District Stand in the center of Union Square and take a slow 360° turn. You are surrounded by some big names in retailing: Neiman Marcus, Macy's,

Saks Fifth Avenue, Levi's, Niketown, and high-end brands like Louis Vuitton and Tiffany & Co. Fan out a little and you'll find the Gap, Banana Republic, Old Navy, H&M, Zara, and myriad designer boutiques on Post Street and Maiden Lane, which is off the Stockton Street side of Union Square. If your interest lies in home products or art, you'll enjoy shopping at Williams-Sonoma's flagship store on the square, a Crate & Barrel nearby, and numerous galleries on Post and Geary streets. Nearly all the kid-oriented stores in this part of town are only for attire.

SoMa Shopping in SoMa is essentially just an extension of the Union Square scene. The Westfield San Francisco Centre, reportedly the largest urban mall in the U.S., is on the south side of Market Street, so is technically in SoMa. One of the mall's anchor stores is **Bloomingdale's,** second in size only to the original store in Manhattan, which carries foolishly priced couture brands for kids. Also on Market Street you'll find the large and difficult to navigate **Jeffrey's Toys** store. If you want to appease the kids, you're better off checking out the tech-oriented stores of the **Sony Metreon** or a museum shop near the Yerba Buena center, such as SFMOMA's terrific **Museum Store** or the **Zeum** gift shop.

Chinatown The stores on Grant Street are clearly geared toward tourists, and you'll see plenty of cheesy plastic cable cars and "I ♥ SF" T-shirts here. But odds are you'll also come across interesting trinkets that make fun gifts for friends back home. Lacquered chopsticks, sake glasses, satin slippers, and silk robes are just a few of the pan-Asian goods you can find. With shops like the **Chinatown Kite Shop** and a plethora of knickknacks in a dizzying array of colors, this is likely to be your kids' favorite shopping ground. For more traditional Chinese goods, such as herbal medicines, exotic foods, or cermonial funerary papers, head to Stockton Street.

Fisherman's Wharf Most shops here are strictly tourist bait, some more tasteful than others. One exception is the **Barnes & Noble** bookstore, which has a great children's section that makes a good rainy day escape. Also, stores in **The Cannery** or **Ghirardelli Square,** such as **Lola of North Beach,** are mostly owned by locals and are worth your while. Artists sometimes display their wares on the pavement in front of Victorian Park. The Powell-Hyde cable car drops you off right next to these places; the F-Market streetcar is another possibility.

North Beach Much North Beach shopping is food-related. Delis are packed with Italian imports—sausages, cheeses, pastas, wine, and so on—at reasonable prices. A couple of stores specialize in Italian pottery, with **Biordi Art Imports** the king of hand-painted Tuscan plates and bowls. You'll also find antiques dealers and the occasional bookstore, including the historic **City Lights Bookstore. Grant Avenue** between Green and Greenwich streets will appeal to fashion-conscious teens. The stores along this row are inspired, and the entire neighborhood is filled with cafes for when you need to recharge. From Union Square, it's an enjoyable walk through Chinatown to get here, or you could take the Powell-Mason cable car line.

The Embarcadero Most retailers in this neighborhood are on the first two levels of the four buildings that make up the Embarcadero Center. This office/entertainment/retail complex between Clay, Sacramento, Battery, and Market streets is like an open-air mall with name-brand chains and a Giants baseball store. The other shopping spot in these parts is inside the **Ferry Building,** located on the Embarcadero at the end of Market Street. There you'll find an assortment of gourmet food shops, including those dedicated to chocolate, sweets, and ice cream. Outside the Ferry Building, the **Farmer's Market** is

a twice-weekly treat. The F-Market streetcar will bring you here, as well as to the Embarcadero Center.

Civic Center/Hayes Valley Although most stores along Hayes Street will appeal solely to grown-ups with trendy, often locally designed fashions and furniture, you'll find cute, unique attire for babies and young children at a few shops like **Lavish** and **Fiddlesticks.** If you have the kids, reward their patience with a hot chocolate at **Christopher Elbow Chocolates.** Take any streetcar to the Van Ness Station to get within walking distance, or hop on the no. 21-Hayes bus from Market Street to ride down Hayes.

Marina/Cow Hollow The best-known neighborhood shopping streets are **Union Street** in Cow Hollow and its counterpart **Chestnut Street** in the Marina. Take the no. 41-Union/Stockton bus for Union Street and the no. 30-Stockton for Chestnut Street. Both streets host a variety of restaurants, cafes, and shops, including national chains and locally owned stores, specializing in home decor, fashion, cosmetics, accessories, and more. These lovely lanes attract trendy, young urbanites as well as families pushing strollers—but Chestnut Street is a marginally more kid-friendly and it's close to an excellent playground in case a little one needs a break.

Pacific Heights The well-to-do living in this neck of the woods do their shopping on Fillmore Street, between Jackson and Sutter streets. You'll find plenty of clothing boutiques for women, but not as many for men and children. Unenthusiastic shoppers can park themselves in one of the many coffee houses or patisseries, or even head over with a parent to Alta Plaza Park. The no. 22-Fillmore bus travels the entire length.

Presidio Heights This family-oriented, high-income neighborhood has two main shopping areas. **Sacramento Street** between Spruce and Divisadero streets is leafy and intimate, with many of its exclusive stores tucked inside old Victorians. You'll find children's furniture, shoes, clothing, and accessories, as well as antiques, women's fashion, and housewares. At Spruce and California streets, 1 block south, you'll spot **Laurel Village,** a 3-block-long strip of markets and stores, a fair number of which cater to children. Add a prenatal center, several pediatricians, and a pediatric dentist to the kid-oriented stores, and the number of children in this stretch of real estate really adds up. Free 90-minute parking is located behind Laurel Village and is often easier to manage than on Sacramento Street. The no. 1-California and no. 4-Sutter buses stop directly across the street.

Russian Hill The stores in this fairly small shopping area centered on Polk Street north of Pacific Street include fascinating antique vendors, furniture stores, and some French-ified gift shops. There's not much for kids except for delectable chocolate croissants at the patisserie **Boulange de Polk** (p. 140). The California Street cable car stops at Polk Street.

The Haight This grungy, colorful piece of San Francisco real estate is a mecca for teens, who will love the rich selection of vintage clothing stores, alternative music stores like **Amoeba Music,** and fashion that can set them apart from the herd. The city's best costume shop, which has a line out the door in the days before Halloween, is also here. Prices are reasonable, and inexpensive cafes dot every block. It's simple to get to Haight Street on either the N-Judah streetcar or the no. 6-Parnassus, no. 7-Haight, or no. 71-Haight-Noriega buses from Market Street.

The Castro/Noe Valley The Castro, with few exceptions, pampers male shoppers with excellent or interesting taste. The one store that's fun for kids is **Cliff's Variety.** Just over the hill is Noe Valley's retail corridor, 24th Street. The J-Church streetcar stops at Church

and 24th streets, an easy trip from downtown. If you want to know where many of the city's kids are growing up, come on over for bagels and coffee and just try not to trip over a stroller. The children's stores take care of kids until they turn 10 or so, and then there's a dearth of product for preteens (perhaps because families have by then fled for the suburbs). You'll find cafes, restaurants, a juice bar, and stores galore.

The Mission The best Mission shopping for non-food items is on Valencia Street. The blocks from 16th to 22nd streets contain a mix of hipster shops, storefront churches, and used-appliance and furniture dens. If you have an adventurous streak or want to see what's up and coming, talk a walk here. BART is the fastest and easiest way to reach the Mission, but please don't linger at the unsavory 16th and Mission streets station. The 24th and Mission streets station is only slightly better. Valencia Street is 1 block to the west.

The Richmond/Sunset Much of the shopping in these largely residential enclaves is concentrated around 9th Avenue and Irving Street. The N-Judah streetcar travels right to this corner, which is also close to the 9th Avenue entrance of Golden Gate Park. For kids, check out the magic shop **Misdirections.** If you head to the San Francisco Zoo, you could follow your visit with a stop by some West Portal shops, which are listed in this chapter. The L-Taraval, M-Oceanview, or K-Ingleside streetcars all stop at the West Portal station, and the M or K cars continue on to the Stonestown Galleria mall. On the Richmond side of the park, Clement Street is the prime retail area, starting at Arguello Street and heading south. This area is like a less crowded Chinatown, with myriad other ethnic restaurants (from French to Burmese) thrown into the mix.

2 SHOPPING A TO Z

ART & CRAFT SUPPLIES

Angray Fantastico Lots of dried and silk flowers, florist supplies, ribbons, baskets, and decorations. 559 6th St. ✆ **415/982-0680.** www.fantasticosf.com.

Artsake Fine-art supplies and classes for all ages in the heart of Noe Valley. 3961 24th St. ✆ **415/695-0506.** www.artsakesf.com.

Cliff's Variety This store is loaded with amusing, useful, necessary, or just plain fun items, among them art supplies. The store also carries a decent selection of toys, games, and puzzles. 479 Castro St. ✆ **415/431-5365.** www.cliffsvariety.com.

Discount Fabrics★ The astonishing array of beaded, patterned, multi-colored, or plain white fabrics will have you dreaming up Halloween costumes for the kids and other crafty projects. 201 11th St. ✆ **415/495-4201;** 2315 Irving St. ✆ **415/564-7333;** 525 4th St. ✆ **415/495-4201.**

Flax Art & Design ★ Everything for the artist is available at Flax, albeit at dear prices. You could lose yourself here just looking at all the pens, not to mention the papers, bound blank books, and ribbons. There's a special section just for kids. 1699 Market St. ✆ **415/552-2355.** www.flaxart.com.

Hobby Co. of San Francisco ★ Serious hobbyists find their way to the city's largest purveyor of model planes, jewelry-making supplies (including a room full of beads), art supplies, and kits—all at reasonable prices. 5150 Geary Blvd. at 16th Ave. ✆ **415/386-2802.** www.hobbycosf.com.

Mendel's Art Supplies & Far Out Fabrics Providing exactly what the name says, this is a fun place to shop because it 's packed with cool mer chandise. 1556 Haight St. ✆ **415/621-1287.** www.mendels.com.

Pearl Art & Craft Supplies This store sells just about ev erything an artist needs—except talent. 969 Market St. ✆ **415/357-1400.** www.pearlpaint.com.

SCRAP A beloved resource for teachers, artists, and locals, SCRAP (Scroungers' Center for Reusable Art Parts) is a center for recycled fabric, wood, paper, and other bits and bobs usable for v arious creations. Prices are very low. Closed Monday and Sunday. 801 Toland St. ✆ **415/647-1746.** www.scrap-sf.org.

Utrecht Art Supplies This comprehensive store frequented by art students from the Academy of Art is close to U nion Square, SoMa, and the F inancial District. 149 New Montgomery St. ✆ **415/777-6920.** www.utrech.com.

BABY/NEWBORN SUPPLIES

DayOne ★ When you reach the second floor of this corporate-style building acr oss the street from bustling Laurel Village, you enter a peaceful environment where dads and moms can relax, nurse their newborns, talk to a lactation consultant, and find everything they need—including dozens of books on parenting, breast pumps, and educational baby toys. 3490 California St., Ste. 203. ✆ **415/440-3291.** www.dayonecenter.com.

Newborn Connections Located in the hospital wher e many area moms have their babies, this shop stocks prenatal and newborn necessities. California Pacific Medical Center, 3698 California St., 1st Floor. ✆ **415/600-2229.**

The Right Start This store is part of a chain that sells high-quality baby gear, games, puzzles, and books. 3435 Sacramento St. ✆ **415/202-1901.** www.therightstart.com.

BABY & KIDS CLOTHING

Beleza This store has its o wn independent line of beautiful hand-embr oidered children's clothing made in Brazil. The rest of the precious items are European brands. 1947 Union St. ✆ **415/345-8900.**

Bubble Two local moms decided B ay Ar ea babies and kids need hipper duds—so bounce on in and spend a bundle on cashmer e bab y dr esses, J apanese T-shirts and designer jeans. 3108 Fillmore St. ✆ **415/771-0570.** www.gotbubble.com.

Citikids Baby News Store This is a big, jampacked place. O ne section has bab y furniture; another has strollers, high chairs, and big toys like baby swings; and the third carries smaller items like ne wborn clothing and bab y bottles. 152 Clement St. ✆ **415/752-3837.** www.citikids.com.

Dottie Doolittle Young socialites find plenty of dr esses, sportswear, and accessories to make it through the season at this bastion of fashion. Sizes go from toddlers to 16 for girls and 12 for boys. 3680 Sacramento St. ✆ **415/563-3244.** www.dottiedoolittle.com.

Fiddlesticks One of the fe w children's shops in H ayes Valley has unique clothes, shoes, and accessories—and some funky furnitur e—for kids to age z ero to sev en. 508 Hayes St. ✆ **415/565-0508.** www.shopfiddlesticks.com.

Giggle ★ Giggle's half-dozen stores around the country feature high-end, often eco-friendly, products to cover every aspect of bab yhood: from organic cotton bedding and top-of-the-line strollers to European high chairs and BPA-free plateware. 2 Embarcadero Center. ✆ **415/986-5437.** 2110 Chestnut St. ✆ **415/440-9034.** www.giggle.com.

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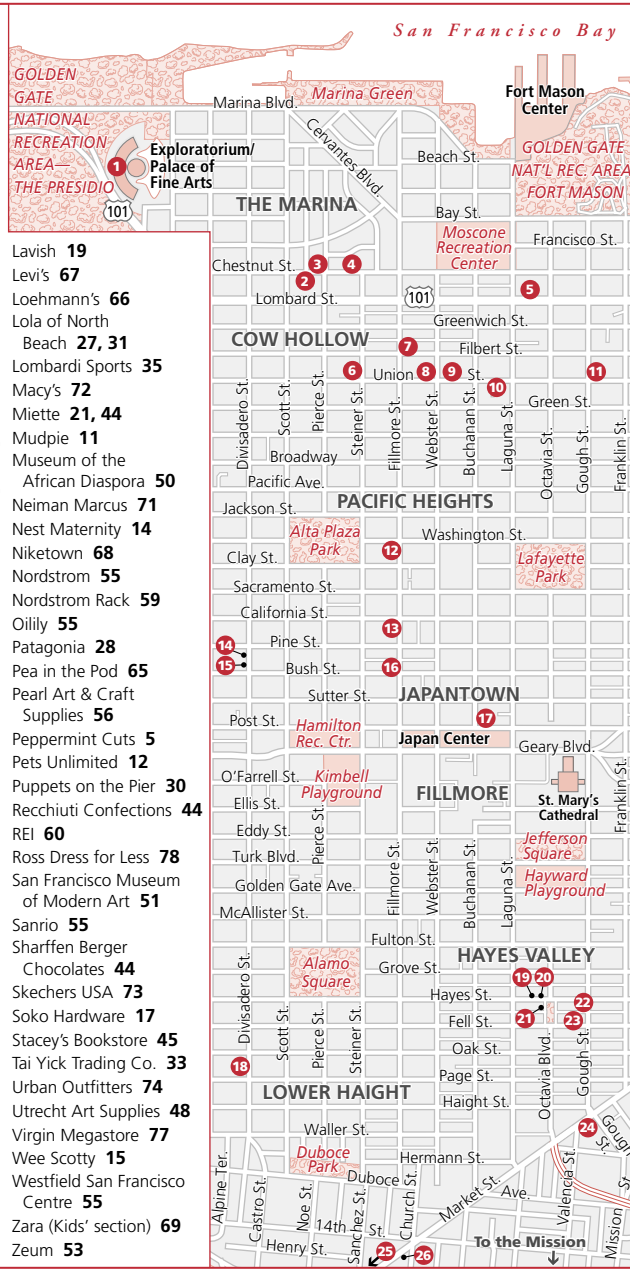

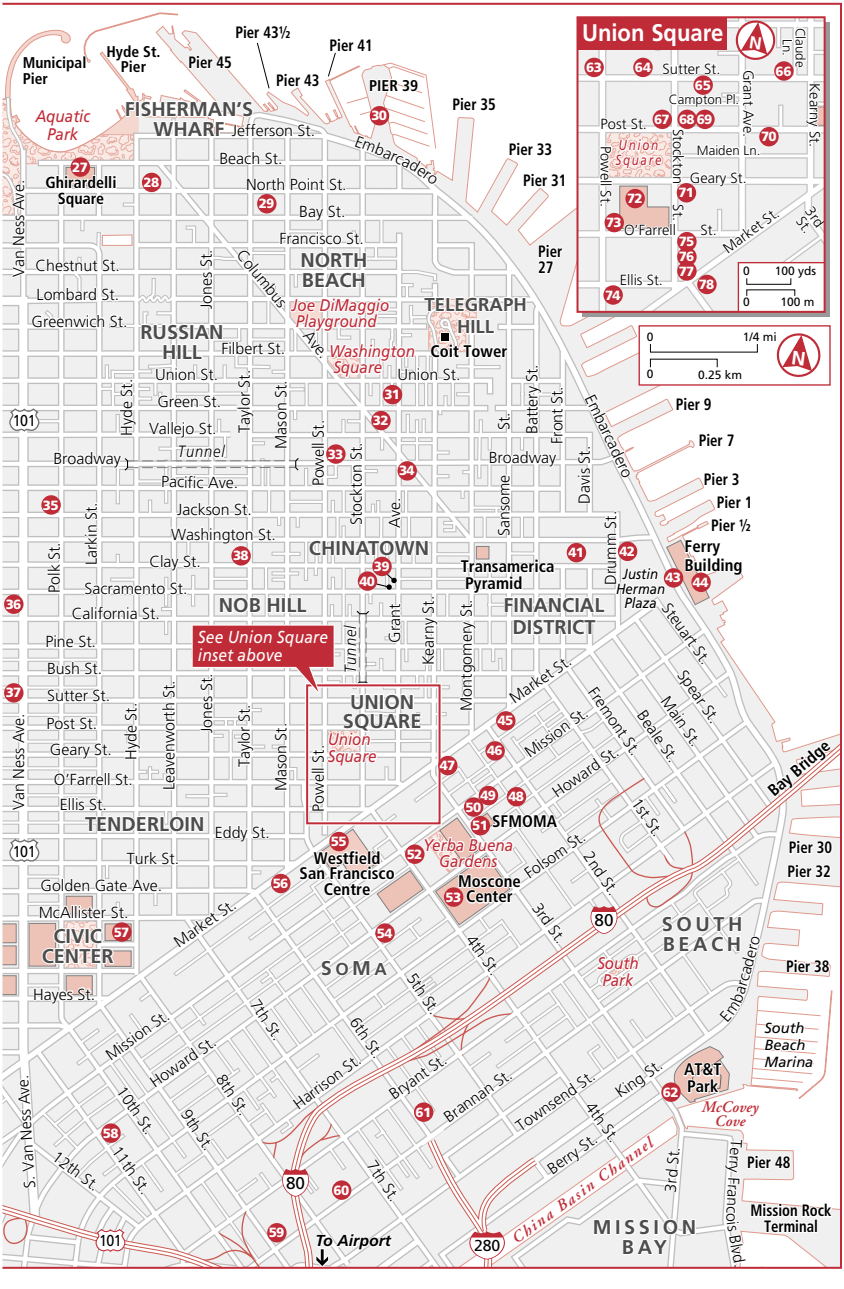
Union Square
Claude Ln.
Kearny St.
Grant Ave.
Stockton St.
Powell St.
Sutter St.
Campton Pl.
Post St.
Maiden Ln.
Geary St.
O'Farrell St.
Market St.
3rd St.
Ellis St.
0 100 yds
0 100 m
0 1/4 mi
0 0.25 km
Pier 43½
Pier 41
Municipal Pier
Hyde St. Pier
Pier 45
Pier 43
PIER 39
Pier 35
Aquatic Park
FISHERMAN'S WHARF
Jefferson St.
Embarcadero
Pier 33
Pier 31
Beach St.
North Point St.
Bay St.
Francisco St.
Pier 27
Ghirardelli Square
Van Ness Ave.
Chestnut St.
Lombard St.
Greenwich St.
NORTH BEACH
Columbus Ave.
Joe DiMaggio Playground
TELEGRAPH HILL
Coit Tower
RUSSIAN HILL
Filbert St.
Washington Square
Union St.
Green St.
Vallejo St.
Broadway
Tunnel
Pacific Ave.
Jackson St.
Washington St.
Clay St.
Sacramento St.
California St.
Pine St.
Bush St.
Sutter St.
Post St.
Geary St.
O'Farrell St.
Ellis St.
Eddy St.
Turk St.
Golden Gate Ave.
McAllister St.
Hayes St.
Hyde St.
Larkin St.
Polk St.
Taylor St.
Jones St.
Leavenworth St.
Mason St.
Powell St.
Stockton St.
Grant Ave.
Kearny St.
Montgomery St.
Sansome St.
Battery St.
Front St.
Davis St.
Drumm St.
Pier 9
Pier 7
Pier 3
Pier 1
Pier ½
Ferry Building
Justin Herman Plaza
Steuart St.
Spear St.
Main St.
Beale St.
Fremont St.
Market St.
Mission St.
Howard St.
1st St.
2nd St.
Folsom St.
3rd St.
4th St.
5th St.
6th St.
7th St.
8th St.
9th St.
10th St.
11th St.
12th St.
Harrison St.
Bryant St.
Brannan St.
Townsend St.
King St.
Berry St.
Embarcadero
Bay Bridge
Pier 30
Pier 32
Pier 38
South Beach Marina
AT&T Park
McCovey Cove
Pier 48
Terry Francois Blvd.
Mission Rock Terminal
China Basin Channel
South Park
SOUTH BEACH
MISSION BAY
SOMA
CIVIC CENTER
TENDERLOIN
NOB HILL
CHINATOWN
FINANCIAL DISTRICT
UNION SQUARE
Union Square
See Union Square inset above
Transamerica Pyramid
Westfield San Francisco Centre
Yerba Buena Gardens
Moscone Center
SFMOMA
To Airport
101
80
280

Honeys and Heroes ★ Contemporary, fashionable, and groovy children's clothing and accessories. 3366 Sacramento St. ✆ **415/567-6780.** www.honeysandheroes.com.

Kidiniki Shop at Kidiniki for upscale designer togs for kids who don't get dirty. 2 Embarcadero Center #S15. ✆ **415/986-5437.**

Kids Only Here you'll find tie-dyed T-shirts, hats, and locally designed retro styles for your flower child. 1608 Haight St. ✆ **415/552-5445.**

Kindersport This store stocks all kinds of serious high-quality sports clothing for toddlers to preteens. 3566 Sacramento St. ✆ **415/563-7778.** www.kindersport.com.

Lavish ★ Baby clothing and gifts made by artists and designers based in the Bay Area or elsewhere in California. 540 Hayes St. ✆ **415/565-0540.**

Mudpie Expensive is the watchword at this refined store stocking elegant baby and kids' clothes, accessories, and children's furniture. Visit the basement for sale items. 1694 Union St. ✆ **415/771-9262.**

Oilily This designer label carries very expensive, but oh-so-coveted, haute couture for kids up to age 12. Don't want to pay $145 for a toddler sweater? Then skip it. Westfield San Francisco Centre, 865 Market St. ✆ **415/593-4622.** www.oililyusa.com.

Small Frys This is where Noe Valley parents pick up leggings, sweaters, and leopard-print coats for their little ones. 4066 24th St. ✆ **415/648-3954.** www.smallfrys.com.

Wee Scotty ★ This funky kids' clothing store offers sewing classes for children 7 and up, teens, and parents. With several sewing machines in back and racks of fabrics out front, your kids will appreciate that their new shirt was actually made on the premises. 1807 Divisadero St. ✆ **415/345-9200.** www.weescotty.com.

BOOKS (INCLUDING COMICS & SPORTS CARDS)

Alexander Book Co. Huge selection of books and a commitment to the community make this a fine resource. 50 2nd St. ✆ **415/495-2992.** www.alexanderbooks.com.

Barnes & Noble This well-known chain has a children's department and seating. 2550 Taylor St. ✆ **415/292-6762.** www.barnesandnoble.com.

Book Passage ★ This new branch of the popular Marin County booksellers has a nice selection of hardbound kids' books and hosts bi-monthly readings by authors of children's literature. Marketplace Shop #42, One Ferry Building. ✆ **415/835-1020.** www.bookpassage.com.

Books Inc. The oldest independent bookseller in town, Books Inc. has excellent children's and young adult sections and spot-on customer service. 3515 California St. ✆ **415/221-3666;** 2251 Chestnut St. ✆ **415/931-3633;** 2275 Market St. ✆ **415/864-6777.** www.booksinc.net.

Booksmith This terrific independent bookseller sponsors readings and book signings featuring contemporary authors. The kids' section is in the back. 1644 Haight St. ✆ **415/863-8688.** www.booksmith.com.

Border's Books and Music These three spacious branches of the national chain are conveniently located 1) on the corner of Union Square, 2) across the street from AT&T Park, and 3) somewhat near the zoo. 400 Post St. ✆ **415/399-1633;** 200 King St. ✆ **415/357-9931;** 233 Winston Dr. (Stonestown). ✆ **415/731-0665.** www.borders.com.

Cartoon Art Museum The small, specialized gift store in the museum has a sophisticated selection of comic books that aren't exclusively for kids. 655 Mission St. ✆ **415/227-8666.** www.cartoonart.org.

Chronicle Books San Francisco's best known publisher shows off its most interesting titles, many of which are for kids. 101 4th St., Ground Floor. ✆ **415/369-6271;** 680 2nd St. ✆ **415/537-4200;** 1846 Union St. ✆ **415/345-8435.** www.chroniclebooks.com.

City Lights Bookstore ★ The most famous bookstore in the Bay Area, Lawrence Ferlinghetti's landmark shop dates back to 1953 and the birth of the Beat movement. Bring your kids in to get a feel for an authentic book-lover's den and to absorb a bit of history. 261 Columbus Ave. ✆ **415/362-8193.** www.citilights.com.

The Collector's Cave (see listing under "Toys.")

Comic Outpost Comic books, sports and fantasy cards, and models are the draw to get you out into this Sunset District shop. 2381 Ocean Ave. ✆ **415/337-6754.** www.comicoutpost.net.

Cover to Cover Booksellers ★ This little bookstore sold so many copies of the first two Harry Potter books that J. K. Rowling did a book signing and reading here, much to the delight of every child in Noe Valley. 1307 Castro St. ✆ **415/282-8080.** www.covertocoversf.com.

Educational Exchange Mostly teachers shop here, but parents can also stop by to pick up workbooks, puzzles, and educational toys, many of which are great for car and airplane trips. 600 35th Ave. ✆ **415/752-3302.** www.educationalexch.com.

Green Apple Books and Music Possibly the best used bookstore in town, with an especially enticing cookbook selection and lots of interesting picks for everyone in the family. 506 Clement St. ✆ **415/387-2272.** www.greenapplebooks.com.

Isotope Comics Popular with collectors of Silver-Age comics, the store also carries Japanese Manga and animation video, action figures, and accessories. 326 Fell St. ✆ **415/621-6543.**-www.isotopecomics.com.

Modern Times Bookstore This collectively owned progressive bookstore in the Mission stocks fiction and nonfiction for adults and children, plus an extensive collection of books in Spanish. 888 Valencia St. ✆ **415/282-9246.** www.mtbs.com.

Natural Resources This is a clearinghouse for classes and information on pregnancy, childbirth, and child-care, with books, toys, and other items for mothers and mothers-to-be. 1367 Valencia St. ✆ **415/550-2611.** www.naturalresources-sf.com.

Stacey's Bookstore Founded as a medical bookstore and popular with the Financial District set, Stacey's also has a well-stocked children's section and is convenient to downtown hotels. 581 Market St. ✆ **415/421-4687.** www.staceys.com.

COSTUMES

Costumes on Haight ★ This is a must-stop for theatrical families or anyone caught short without a funny hat or fright wig. With more than 1,000 costumes and accessories galore, it's plain fun to look around. 735 Haight St. ✆ **415/621-1356.** www.costumesonhaight.com.

One Stop Party Shop (see listing under "Party Supplies".)

DEPARTMENT STORES

Barneys New York The hip, posh bastion of consumerism is now in SF—and all the top designers are represented. You won't find a thing for kids here, though, which may be just as well. 77 O'Farrell St. ✆ **415/268-3500.** www.barneys.com.

Bloomingdale's The kids section carries ultra-chic, outrageously-priced brands like Juicy Couture, Diesel, Seven Jeans, and Quicksilver. Kids won't get bored, as a few game kiosks have been installed across the children's department and a wide-screen TV is in the adjoining lounge. 845 Market St. ✆ **415/856-5300.** www.bloomingdales.com.

Macy's It can be tough to find what you're looking for at this densely stocked behemoth, but the kids' clothing department occasionally has good deals, though no kids' shoes. 170 O'Farrell St. ✆ **415/397-3333;** 3251 20th Ave. ✆ **415/753-4000.** www.macys.com.

Neiman Marcus The baby and children's department carries only the top American brands with prices that will make you laugh—or cry. This is one of the few places in the city you can find traditional winter wool coats. 150 Stockton St. ✆ **415/362-3900.** www.neimanmarcus.com.

Nordstrom ★ Teens tell me "BP," or the Brass Plum section of Nordstrom, is the go-to place for cool clothes. The children's clothing and shoe departments are also worth a gander; there's usually a great find or two on the sales rack. Westfield San Francisco Centre, 865 Market St. ✆ **415/243-8500;** Stonestown Galleria, 285 Winston Dr. ✆ **415/753-1344.** www.nordstrom.com.

DISCOUNT SHOPPING

Burlington Coat Factory Beyond coats, maternity wear, and furniture at steep discounts, you'll find an entire "Baby Depot" area with infant clothing and furniture, toys, and car seats. 899 Howard St. ✆ **415/495-7234.** www.burlingtoncoatfactory.com.

Loehmann's The national discount chain has a convenient location in downtown SF—with women's, men's, juniors' and children's sections. 222 Sutter St. ✆ **415/982-3215.** www.loehmanns.com.

Nordstrom Rack If you have the patience to shift through the racks, you'll find designer jeans, dresses, shoes, kids' apparel, and much more for peanuts. 555 9th St. ✆ **415/934-1211.** www.nordstrom.com.

Peek-a-Bootique High-quality new and slightly-used clothes for infants and toddlers, in addition to used toys, strollers, and accessories. 1306 Castro St. ✆ **415/641-6192.** www.peekabootiquesf.com.

Ross Dress for Less The Market Street store is in constant disarray, but the branches outside downtown have tops and jeans that appeal to teenagers. 799 Market St. ✆ **415/957-9222;** 5200 Geary Blvd. ✆ **415/386-7677;** 2300 16th St. ✆ **415/554-1901;** 1545 Sloat Blvd. ✆ **415/661-0481.** www.rossstores.com.

Skechers USA The family can update their casual shoe wardrobe at this Mission District outlet and break them in looking for lunch on 24th Street. A regular store is downtown. 2600 Mission St. ✆ **415/401-6211;** 770 Market St. ✆ **415/781-8703.** www.skechers.com.

FASHION & MATERNITY

Due Maternity ★ You'll be the hottest pregnant mommy in your neighborhood with Due's stylish apparel. 3112 California St. ✆ **415/674-9854.** www.duematernity.com.

H&M ★ You'll find hip duds, at irresistible prices, at this successful European chain. For H&M's popular, and very fashionable, kids' line, head to the Westfield location. 150 Post St. ✆ **415/986-0156;** 8080 Powell St. ✆ **415/986-4215;** Westfield San Francisco Centre, 845 Market St. ✆ **415/543-1430;** Stonestown Galleria, 3251 20th Ave. ✆ **415/242-1459.** www.hm.com.

Japanese Weekend Contemporary and comfortable maternity clothing made with quality fabrics. 500 Sutter St. ✆ **415/989-6667.** www.japaneseweekend.com.

Mom's the Word Part of a national chain with stylish maternity clothes, this shop also provides a play area for kids, stroller parking, and a restroom. 3385 Sacramento St. ✆ **415/441-8261.** www.momsthewordmaternity.com.

Nest Maternity ★ The clothes in here are so darn cute that if you're not pregnant, you'll wish you were. They stock darling onesies for newborns, too. 1839 Divisadero St. ✆ **415/673-3320.** www.nest-maternity.com.

Patagonia This store is an excellent source for high-quality fleece and outerwear for children's sizes 3 to 14. 770 North Point St. ✆ **415/771-2050.** www.patagonia.com.

Pea in the Pod A branch of the national maternity-wear chain. 2903 45 Sutter St. ✆ **415/391-1240.** www.apeainthepod.com.

Zara ★ It's hard enough to resist Zara's grown-up designer knockoffs. But upstairs in the kids' section, you'll find super chic, and superbly priced, casual wear, coats, and even party clothes, and you're unlikely to leave empty-handed. The Westfield location does not carry the kids' line. 250 Post St. ✆ **415/399-6930;** Westfield San Francisco Centre, 865 Market St. ✆ **415/817-5021.** www.zara.com.

GAMES

Gamescape ★ This great store features specialty games and is run by folks who love their work and like to play. 333 Divisadero St. (at Fell St.). ✆ **415/621-4263.** www.gamescapesf.net.

GIFTS & SOUVENIRS

Biordi Art Imports Beautiful examples of hand-painted Majolica dishes and serving pieces nearly too pretty to use. Think twice before letting young children come in to this store, which is jampacked with fragile wares. 412 Columbus Ave. ✆ **415/392-8096.** www.biordi.com.

Gump's ★ For tasteful, one-of-a-kind home accessories—including fine crystal, elegant tableware, and other artful items—and incredible service, head into this San Francisco institution. 135 Post St. ✆ **415/982-1616.** www.gumps.com.

Just for Fun-Scribbledoodles Stationary, cards, frames, board games, *Mad Lib* books, elegant journals, and other gift items are what you'll find at this popular Noe Valley store. 3982 24th St. ✆ **415/285-4068.** www.justforfun.invitations.com.

Kar'ikter This fun Union Square store carries a huge line of merchandise based on licensed European characters—namely Tin Tin, Babar, Asterix, and The Little Prince. Items include books, T-shirts, posters, and miniature characters. 418 Sutter St. ✆ **415/434-1120.** www.karikter.com.

Lola of North Beach While sightseeing in North Beach or Ghirardelli Square, stop in and pick up stationery, candles, photo albums, or baby blankies for friends back home. 1415 Grant Ave. ✆ **415/781-1817;** 900 North Point St. (in Ghirardelli Square). ✆ **415/567-7760.** www.lolaofnorthbeach.com.

Sanrio ★ Little girls love this Japanese import with all kinds of *Hello Kitty* character-stamped items including stationery, art supplies, carrying cases, coin banks, you name it. Westfield San Francisco Centre, 865 Market St. ✆ **415/495-3056.** www.sanrio.com.

Soko Hardware (Finds) You'd never guess it from the name, but this Japantown store carries a great selection of Japanese housewares, including ceramic plates, tea sets, and sake cups—all of which make terrific gifts. 1698 Post St. ✆ **415/931-5510.**

Sue Fisher King ★ This is where the San Francisco society set comes for precious home furnishings, including exquisite table linens, cashmere blankets, china, silver flatware, and more. 3067 Sacramento St. ✆ **415/922-7276.** www.suefisherking.com.

Tai Yick Trading Company (Finds) This is a real find for tiny china tea sets, miniature Chinese bowls, and all kinds of porcelain and pottery. It's a good Chinatown store for household goods. 1400 Powell St. at Broadway St. ✆ **415/986-0961.** www.taiyick.net.

HAIRCUTS

Peppermint Cuts Nervous kids calm down when they spy the pony that's used as a seat for the haircuts. 1772 Lombard St. ✆ **415/292-6177.**

Snippety Crickets This place makes my girls feel special. With toys to keep them occupied and lollipops after it's all over, a trip to the hair dresser can actually be fun. Drop-ins are welcome, although you may have to wait. 3562 Sacramento St. ✆ **415/441-9363.**

MAGIC SHOPS

Misdirections ★ Come here for all the rubber masks, tasteless jokes, novelties, and magic books your young magician needs. Closed Mondays. 1236 9th Ave. ✆ **415/566-2180.** www.misdirections.com.

MARKETS

Alemany Flea Market Get an early start on Sunday mornings for the one local, regularly scheduled flea market within city limits. Sellers take up position in a giant

Mall, Rats!

While many San Franciscans enjoy checking out unique boutiques on cafe-lined shopping streets, some can't resist the benefits of an indoor mall: familiar names, nearby restrooms, and food courts. San Francisco's main mall is the gleaming, newly expanded **Westfield San Francisco Centre** on the corner of 5th and Market streets. Reportedly the country's largest mall in an urban area, Westfield is fortunately laid out in a way that feels manageable. Its stores include Bloomingdale's, Nordstrom, and a dizzying collection of trendy shops, such as Abercrombie & Fitch, H&M, and Oilily. You'll find relatively high-end restaurants (for a mall) and even a 30,000-square-foot gourmet grocery. **Stonestown Galleria,** way out in the Sunset district, is a more typical, large indoor mall. Anchored by Nordstrom and Macy's, it has two long floors of stores broken up by a food court upstairs and a circular lobby downstairs. The Gap, Gymboree, The Children's Place, and American Eagle Outfitters are among the brand names for kids and teens. Stonestown is located on 19th Avenue at Winston Drive, close to San Francisco State University, and the M-Oceanview runs right in front. Both Westfield and Stonestown are open daily.

parking lot off I-280, at the southern edge of B ernal Heights (below the M ission Dis- trict). There's a hodgepodge of junk, including furnitur e and tools. The same site hosts the Alemany Farmers' Market, a smaller counterpart to the one at the Ferry Building, on Saturdays from 6am to 5pm. 100 Alemany Blvd., at the Hwy. 101/I-280 Interchange. ✆ **415/647-2043.** www.sfgov.org/alemany.

Ferry Plaza Farmers Market ★ Saturday morning excursions to this big, beautiful outdoor market are a ritual for many families ar ound the city. The mostly organic pr o- duce and fruit are the best quality anywhere, brought to market and sold by the growers. Vendors also sell olive oils, honey, flowers, and sausages; local restaurants have booths set up to provide breakfast. The Saturday market is from 8am to 2pm; a much smaller v er- sion is on Tuesdays from 10am to 2pm. One Ferry Building, The Embarcadero. ✆ **415/291-3276.** www.ferrybuildingmarketplace.com.

MUSEUM STORES

Asian Art Museum Stor e You'll find a small selection of stuff for kids her e, from books and puppets to occasional origami kits or other exhibition-elated items. 200 Larkin St. ✆ **415/581-3600.** www.asianart.org/store.htm.

de Young Museum Store ★ Downstairs, this creative museum shop carries unique children's games and inspir ed art books designed just for kids, as w ell as ex otic instru- ments from around the world (all certified as "fair trade" to boot). Upstairs, sleek house- wares like Scandinavian cutting boar ds or J apanese bowls tempt shoppers. Golden Gate Park, 50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Dr. ✆ **415/750-3642.** www.famsf.org/store.

Museum of the A frican Diapora MoAD's gift shop is petite, but includes some interesting kids' books on Africa and African-Americans and a collection of adorable, beaded African dolls. 685 Mission St. ✆ **415/358-7200.** www.moadsf.org.

San Francisco Museum of Modern A rt ★ This is a gr eat shop for gifts, with an intelligent selection of books and toys for children. Their satellite shop at SFO's Interna- tional terminal is a gr eat place to kill time. 151 3rd St. ✆ **415/357-4000.** www.sfmoma.org.

Zeum This delightful shop is full of c reative toys that may be as much for adults as for kids. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, 221 Fourth St. ✆ **415/820-3348.** www.zeum.org.

MUSIC

Amoeba Music ★ You've found it: the holy grail of CDs, r ecords, and cassettes, with in-store concer ts and an intelligent staff . 1855 Haight St. ✆ **415/831-1200.** w ww.amoeba. com.

Clarion Music C enter ★ This fascinating Chinato wn stor e stocks sev eral unusual instruments, including dr ums, flutes, and shakers, fr om every culture. It's also gr eat for CDs and gifts. 816 Sacramento St. ✆ **415/391-1317.** www.clarionmusic.com.

Guitar Center Come here for the best prices and se rvice on guitars and amps for y our child's garage band. 1645 Van Ness Ave. ✆ **415/409-0350.** www.guitarcenter.com.

Haight-Ashbury Music C enter Lessons, r entals, r epairs, y ou-name-it. I f y ou're looking for guitars, percussion, amps, keyboards, folk instruments, or wind instruments, you'll find them here. 1540 Haight St. ✆ **415/863-7327.** www.haight-ashbury-music.com.

Lark In The Morning Musique Shoppe ★ Beyond an incr edible selection of musical instruments, books, recordings, videos, and musical artwork from more than 50 cultures, the Lar k stocks plenty of charming instr uments suitable for y oung childr en. 1453 Valencia St. ✆ **415/922-4277.** www.larkinthemorning.com.

Pet Heaven

Dog and cat lovers looking for a rainy-day activity, or parents wavering on the edge of giving into those pleas for a pet, should take a gander at **Maddie's Pet Adoption Center** (250 Florida St. at 16th St.; ✆ **415/554-3000;** www.sfspca.org). An adjunct of the local SPCA, this clean and bright building is filled with dogg ie dorms and kitty condos furnished as if they were the guest quarters in a typical San Francisco Edwardian. Dogs loll around on beds and sofas watching TV or playing with toys, while cats perch on ledges watching the action in their aquariums. The idea is to resocialize the animals, so visitors are encouraged to tour the facilities.

Alt ernatively, **Pets Unlimited** (2343 Fillmore St. at Washington St.; ✆ **415/563-6700;** www.petsunlimited.org) is a delightful multipurpose pet car e center, animal hospital, and pet adoption center nestled amidst all the posh boutiques. Be warned that you may meet the dog or cat of your child's dreams.

Virgin Megastore Park your adolescents here if you plan more boring shopping around Union Square. They'll know what to do. 2 Stockton St. ✆ **415/397-4525.** www.virginmega.com.

PARTY SUPPLIES

Angray Fantastico See listing under ""Art & Craft Supplies."

Make a Party Cups, plates, balloon, and all sorts of decorations for any kids' party are what you'll find here. 389 Arguello Blvd. ✆ **415/387-9911.**

One Stop Party Shop This small store at the southern end of Noe Valley has a thorough stock of themed accessories—and several costumes—for your next fete. You can also order balloon bouquets here. 1600 Church St. ✆ **415/824-0414.** www.onestoppartysf.com.

PET SHOPS & PET SUPPLIES

Catnip & Bones Dogs, cats, and their doted owners will be delighted with the offerings at this cheery shop. From all-natural dog treats to catnip-infused playthings, everything is high quality and well priced. 2220 Chestnut St. ✆ **415/359-9100.**

George The discerning pet owner will find hip dog and cat accessories like stylish bowls and decorative ID tags here. George carries cool clothing for pets' human companions as well. 2411 California St. ✆ **415/441-0564.** www.georgesf.com.

6th Avenue Aquarium Featuring 13,000 gallons of water in tanks around the store filled with a wide selection of fresh- and saltwater fish. 425 Clement St. ✆ **415/668-7190.** www.6thaveaquarium.net.

SCIENCE STORES

California Academy of Sciences The academy's brand-new home in Golden Gate Park is filled with an impressive collection of educational materials, games, toys, and books. 55 Music Concourse Dr. ✆ **415/321-8000.** www.calacademy.org/store.

Exploratorium ★ The shop inside this science center is well stocked and well maintained, with curb appeal for kids of all ages. You'll likely be as tempted by the offerings as your children. 3601 Lyon St., at Marina Blvd. ✆ **415/397-5673.** www.exploratorium.edu.

SHOES

Brook's Shoes for Kids Stylish European and interesting American brands are on offer here, and the staff is knowledgeable and friendly. 3307 Sacramento St. ✆ **415/440-7599.** www.brooksshoesforkids.com.

Niketown If it takes a village to shoe your children, this multilevel giant will fill the bill. 278 Post St. ✆ **415/392-6453.** www.niketown.com.

Shoe Biz Think tennis shoes, skate shoes, and bright red boots with thick rubber soles. This is where area teens find the latest footwear. 1420, 1446, and 1553 Haight St. ✆ **415/864-0990;** 3810 24th St. ✆ **415/821-2528;** 877 Valencia St. ✆ **415/550-8655.** www.shoebizsf.com.

Striderite Comfortable, fashionable shoes for babies, tots, and young kids—in extra-wide sizes as well. 3555 California St. ✆ **415/751-5444.** www.striderite.com.

SPORTS STUFF

Aqua Surf Shop A cool surf shop with two locations in the city. 2830 Sloat Blvd. ✆ **415/242-9283;** 1742 Haight St. ✆ **415/876-2782.** www.aquasurfshop.com.

Boardsports School Rent or purchase your windsurf boards, kitesurf board, or stand-up paddle board here. 1200 Clay St. ✆ **415/385-1224.** www.boardsportsschool.com.

City Cycle Although mostly for adults, this shop at the corner of Union Street also stocks bikes for the younger set. 3001 Steiner St. ✆ **415/346-2242.** www.citycycle.com.

Hi's Tackle Box This all-purpose supplier of fishing gear was scheduled to move out of town to South San Francisco after this went to press, but it's still sure to draw enthusiasts from around the Bay Area. 40 Chestnut Ave., South San Francisco. ✆ 650/588-1200. www.histacklebox.com.

Lombardi Sports This big store stocks clothing and equipment for teens and adults, with a few kids' items as well. The good news is validated parking underground. 1600 Jackson St. ✆ **415/771-0600.** www.lombardisports.com.

Purple Skunk *The* hot spot for longboards, skateboards, and snowboards, with a helpful yet hip staff. 5820 Geary Blvd. ✆ **415/668-7905.** www.purpleskunk.com.

REI Nature lovers will be delighted with the San Francisco branch of this preeminent sporting goods/outdoor adventure store. 840 Brannan St. ✆ **415/934-1938.** www.rei.com/stores/83.

Skates on Haight ★ A premier site for skates, skateboards, and skate rentals. 1818 Haight St. ✆ **415/752-8375.** www.skatesonhaight.com.

Sports Basement ★ Never mind that signs on the walls still read "Frozen Foods" and "Bakery" at this former military PX in the Presidio. This place now stocks the best-priced selection of sporting goods in town and has a huge parking lot to boot. A second location is near AT&T Park. 610 Old Mason St. ✆ **415/437-0100;** 1590 Bryant St. ✆ **415/437-0100.** www.sportsbasement.com.

Valencia Cyclery San Francisco's favorite bicycle shop also has the biggest selection in town. 1065 and 1077 Valencia St. ✆ **415/550-6600.** www.valenciacyclery.com.

Wise Surfboards You'll find the biggest collection of surf stuff here: short boards, long boards, wet suits, and some cool clothes. 800 Great Hwy. ✆ **415/750-9473.** www.wisesurfboards.com.

STROLLERS, CRIBS & FURNITURE

Citikids Baby News Store See listing under "Baby and Kids' Clothing."

Fiddlesticks You'll find some unique furnitur e her e. S ee listing under "B aby and Kids' Clothing."

Giggle ★ For expensive str ollers and some furnitur e, tr y G iggle. S ee listing under "Baby and Kids' Clothing."

Jonathan Ka ye The bab y section has a sophisticated selection of unpainted and painted furnitur e to complete bab y's r oom, including cribs, bedding, changing tables, and bur eaus. F or older childr en, the stor e carries small tables and chairs, bunk beds, desks, toys, and accessories. 3548 Sacramento St. ✆ **415/563-0773.** www.jonathankaye.com.

The Right Start This stor e carries sev eral str oller brands. S ee listing under "B aby/ Newborn Supplies."

SWEETS FOR THE SWEET

Christopher Elbow Chocolates With flavors like lavender caramel and Venezuelan spice, some of the chocolates her e may be too sophisticated for little sw eet-tooths. Then again, when it comes to chocolates, kids can be r emarkably adv enturous. 401 Hayes St. ✆ **415/355-1100.** www.elbowchocolates.com.

Cocoa B ella Choc olates Sample ar tisan chocolates fr om ar ound the world. Your kids will enjoy the hot chocolate and chocolate-cov ered gummy bears. 2102 Union St. ✆ **415/931-6213;** Westfield San Francisco Centre, 865 Market St. ✆ **415/896-5222.** www.cocoabella.com.

Ghirardelli S oda F ountain & Choc olate Shop Order a sundae at the former factory of G hirardelli Chocolates. O r stop b y the U nion Square outlet, which just sells chocolate. 900 North Point St. ✆ **415/771-4903;** 44 Stockton St. ✆ **415/397-3030.** www.ghirardelli.com.

Miette Don't miss the chance to taste luscious cakes, pastries, and sw eets made with all-natural, organic, and often local, ingredients. Ferry Building Marketplace Shop #10, One Ferry Building, The Embarcadero. ✆ **415/837-0300;** 449 Octavia St. ✆ **415/626-6221.** www.miettecakes.com.

Recchiuti Confections A gourmet sw eet shop in ev ery sense, with sublime locally crafted chocolates, handmade marshmallo ws, and br ownies. Ferry Building M arketplace Shop #30, One Ferry Building, The Embarcadero. ✆ **415/834-9494.** www.recchiuti.com.

Scharffen Berger Chocolates In 1996 a former winemaker and his business par tner decided to make the finest chocolates possible. Although H ershey bought S harffen Berger in 1995, the shop 's awar d-winning r ecipes hav e so far r emained mer cifully unchanged. Marketplace Shop #14, One F erry Building , The Embar cadero. ✆ **415/981-9150.** www.scharffenberger.com.

TEEN SHOPS

Abercrombie & F itch From the baggy jeans to the too-tight tank tops, teens lo ve everything in this store. Westfield San Francisco Centre, 845 Market St. ✆ **415/284-9276.** www.abercrombieandfitch.com.

American Rag Teens roll into American Rag for the latest str eet fashions and only the coolest vintage duds. 1305 Van Ness Ave. ✆ **415/474-5214.** www.amrag.com.

Fun Facts **Stump the Tour Guide**

Question: Why are Levi's jeans sewn with orange thread? ***Answer:*** In the 1800s, copper rivets were used to make the jeans stronger. The thread matches the color of the rivets.

Levi's Teens will find dozens of styles of jeans and jackets here. You could also pick up a complete outfit for infants here, if you were so inclined. 300 Post St. ✆ **415/501-0100.** www.levi.com.

Urban Outfitters This store sells trendy attire that looks likes it's already been around the block a couple of times, but teens love it. 80 Powell St. ✆ **415/989-1515.** www.urbanoutfitters.com.

THEME STORES

Giants Baseball Dugout Stores If you're baseball fans, the official hats, jerseys, and jackets are terrific mementos of a San Francisco vacation. You'll also find cool souvenirs and possibly game tickets. The AT&T Park location is the best and is open daily. 24 Willie Mays Plaza. ✆ **415/972-2000;** 4 Embarcadero Center. ✆ **415/951-8888;** 3251 20th Ave. (Stonestown Galleria). ✆ **415/242-3222.** www.sfgiants.com.

TOYS

Ambassador Toys ★ Classic European dolls, wonderful wooden toys and puzzles, and clever games and books are among the great playthings at this delightful store. The clerks kindly gift wrap as well. 186 West Portal Ave. ✆ **415/759-8697;** 2 Embarcadero Center. ✆ **415/345-8697.** www.ambassadortoys.com.

The Ark Toys This small shop is stocked with carefully selected wooden toys, Brio, puzzles, and wee costumes. 3845 24th St. ✆ **415/821-1257.**

Chinatown Kite Shop From world-class stunt fliers to more modest models that could fit into your suitcase, an awesome array of kites is on display here. 717 Grant Ave. ✆ **415/989-5182.** www.chinatownkite.com.

Cliff's Variety See listing under "Art & Craft Supplies."

The Collector's Cave ★ New and vintage comic books, including back-issue collectibles and dozens of titles from Marvel Comics and DC Comics, trading cards, wooden toys, action figures, and board games are among the treasures you'll find here. 2072 Union St. ✆ **415/929-0231.** www.thecollectorscave.com.

Heroes Club Japanese videos, action toys, and odd monsters fill this store. 840 Clement St. ✆ **415/387-4552.** www.artoftoy.com.

Jeffrey's Toys This big crowded store between Union Square and SoMa carries brand-name toys. 685 Market St. ✆ **415/243-8697.**

Puppets on the Pier I'd actually go to PIER 39 for this store. From kittens, bunnies, and puppies to whales, dragons, and even cockroaches, the collection of puppets is amazing. PIER 39, Beach St. at Embarcadero. ✆ **415/781-4435.** www.puppetdream.com.

Standard 5 & 10 This old-fashioned variety store contains an aisle of games and toys, including some clever wooden ones. Despite its small size, it usually has that one toy your kid really wants, like a Webkinz kitty or Thomas train item. 3545 California St. ✆ **415/751-5767.** www.standard5n10.com.

VINTAGE CLOTHING

Buffalo Exchange These stores are crammed with old and new attire from the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. It's a good place for your teens to see the latest street fashions. 1555 Haight St. ✆ **415/431-7733;** 1210 Valencia St. ✆ **415/647-8332.** www.buffaloexchange.com.

Crossroads Trading Unlike other thrift stores, Crossroads gets some of its merchandise from wholesalers, so you'll also find new items in various sizes. 1519 Haight St. ✆ **415/355-0555;** 2123 Market St. ✆ **415/552-8740;** 1901 Fillmore St. ✆ **415/775-8885;** 555 Irving St. ✆ **415/681-0100;** 2123 Market St. ✆ **415/552-8740.** www.crossroadstrading.com.

The Wasteland The staff is choosy about what used clothes it 'll take in, so clothing and accessories here are hip and retro at the same time. 1660 Haight St. ✆ **415/863-3150.** www.thewasteland.com.

10

Entertainment for the Whole Family

It never ceases to amaze me just how many exciting things are going on in San Francisco—from dance to music and theater. While not all of it will be suitable for young children, with all the choices, you are sure to find something fun for everyone in the family.

Vacation periods are the best times for entertainment. During the winter holidays, a wealth of music, dance, and theater productions for kids is available—from the ODC Dance Company's annual production of *The Velveteen Rabbit* to the San Francisco Ballet's *Nutcracker* performances. In the summer, concerts and circus performances take place in various parks nearly every weekend.

The **American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.),** one of the finest theatrical companies and schools in the nation, produces consistently excellent drama, but not every play is suitable family fare. Broadway road companies, on the other hand, drop into town for 2- to 6-week runs of musicals that have been playing New York City for at least a year. Most shows appear to be chosen to please the widest audience. *Wicked* is slated to come in 2009, and while it's not recommended for kids under 8, my girls saw the New York production a few years back and came out unscarred.

For teens, a few music clubs are open to under-21s. If you want to take your kids to a rock concert, stay abreast of who's coming to town and work the phone or the Internet for tickets.

Getting the fledglings motivated to attend any kind of performance after a full day of sightseeing can be a challenge. If it's possible to return to your hotel for an afternoon rest before an event, do so. Preplanning will also make a difference. Before you arrive, make a list of what's playing in town and talk it over with the family. With everyone's involvement, an evening of theater, a concert, or even a movie can become one of the highlights of your vacation. Also consider giving something new a try. If your family doesn't generally attend dance recitals, for example, consider seeing one of San Francisco's modern dance ensembles just to shake things up a little.

Use the Internet to find out what's playing in town during your visit. For entertainment directed at families with kids under 12, sign up for the **GoCityKids.com** weekly e-newsletter. For comprehensive listings, you can't beat the *San Francisco Chronicle's* website, www.sfgate.com. If you want more detailed information about specific performances, check out www.SFArts.org. While in town, the "Sunday Datebook" section of the *Chronicle* is the bible for entertainment listings. Otherwise, most hotels will have the monthly tourist magazine *Where San Francisco,* which has good coverage of events, in the rooms or at the concierge desk. You can also pick up *SF Arts Monthly* and *Theatre Bay Area* magazine at the TIX kiosk at Union Square. The free *San Francisco Bay Guardian,* available in street racks and in cafes, has a massive selection of listings, but it may be tough to discern what's good for kids. Look instead for a copy of *Bay Area Parent,* a monthly freebie covering San Francisco and the Bay Area. It's available in many children's stores.

TIX Bay Area (www.tixbayarea.com) is a one-stop resource for purchasing tickets online, by mail, or in person at their pavilion at the Union Square plaza (✆ **415/433-7827**), Tuesday to Thursday from 11am to 6pm, Friday 11am to 7pm, Saturday 10am to 7pm, and Sunday from 10am to 3pm (closed Mondays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day). TIX also sells a limited roster of half-price tickets and is a Ticketmaster outlet. Half-price tickets, which go on sale at 11am, may be purchased from the office, cash only, for same-day performances. You can check the offerings in person or online. TicketWeb (www.ticketweb.com) is a popular online box office with an easy-to-use interface and relationships with most clubs and entertainment venues. You can also ask your hotel's concierge to help obtain tickets to hot shows. Other resources include **City Box Office** (180 Redwood St., Ste. 100, San Francisco, CA 94102; ✆ **415/392-4400;** www.cityboxoffice.com) and box offices at individual theaters and concert halls.

1 THE BIG VENUES

The Cow Palace Completed in 1941 and intended for use as a permanent livestock pavilion, the Cow Palace is a catchall for events requiring a whole lot of space. Regular customers include the Grand National Rodeo, Disney on Ice, Golden Gate Kennel Club, World Wrestling Entertainment, The Great Dickens Christmas Fair, and Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey Circus. Located near the Brisbane/San Francisco border, it's not the easiest place to find. If you have tickets to an event here, you'll be better off driving. Tickets are available through the Cow Palace box office or Ticketmaster. Geneva Ave. (at Santos St.). ✆ **415/404-4111.** www.cowpalace.com.

Curran Theatre The Curran opened in 1922 with the goal of hosting New York and European productions in San Francisco. Its "Best of Broadway" series has featured popular hits like *Les Miserables,* and 2009 will see Monty Python's *Spamalot, Grease,* and *Ever After,* a take on Cinderella, hit the town. Its partner theaters, the Orpheum and Golden Gate (see below) also hold big-name shows such as *Jesus Christ Superstar* and occasional kid-friendly fare like *Wicked.* Shows run anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks. Your best bet for advance tickets is through Ticketmaster. 445 Geary St. (btw. Mason and Taylor sts.). ✆ **415/551-2000.** www.shnsf.com. Tickets $30–$99.

Davies Symphony Hall This stunning auditorium was built in 1980 to house the San Francisco Symphony. The hall's excellent acoustics and modern interior set this hall apart from many of San Francisco's more classic venues. See "Concerts," later in this chapter, for information on the Symphony's offerings. 201 Van Ness Ave. (at Grove St.). ✆ **415/864-6000.** www.sfsymphony.org.

The Fillmore Auditorium Anyone who was listening to rock 'n' roll in the 1960s undoubtedly knows of the Fillmore. The late Bill Graham made his reputation here as a concert producer and promoter, and iconic musicians from Janis Joplin to Frank Zappa to Jerry Garcia played the former dance hall. Today, the Fillmore continues to rock with acts such as Los Lobos, Tom Jones, and Willie Nelson. With the exception of babes in arms, you can bring your kids here. Seating is limited, so either prepare to stand in a crowded room (and be grateful for California's no-smoking laws) or head up to the balcony, where you'll also need to stand to see the show, but which is usually not too crowded. Tickets can be purchased through the website's Ticketmaster link or at the box

Tips Comings & Goings

Cable cars will get you to Union Square theaters if you're coming from North Beach. From the Marina or Union Street, take a no. 30-Stockton or no. 45-Union/Stockton bus. If you prefer to take a cab to your lodgings afterward, walk to a big hotel to catch one. You can find a number of parking garages near Union Square with fees beginning at $10 for the evening.

You can reach the Civic Center, where the opera, ballet, and symphony are located, by any Muni Metro streetcar or any bus along Van Ness Avenue. Don't walk around this area unescorted after dark to get back to the Muni station. If a taxi isn't immediately available, walk to one of the many nearby restaurants and ask the host to call one for you. If you're driving, you can park in the garage on Grove Street between Franklin and Gough streets. The garage is well used by people attending performances, so you won't be alone walking back to your car after a show.

Venues located in SoMa or the Mission have troubles similar to the Civic Center. You can usually get to the performance by public transportation, but returning late at night by bus is less interesting (or perhaps more interesting, depending on your perspective). Again, if you're attending a show in this area, don't expect to automatically hail a cab afterwards. Instead, use your cellphone or walk to a nearby restaurant or bar and call one of these local cab companies:

- **Desoto Cab:** ✆ 415/970-1300
- **Luxor Cabs:** ✆ 415/282-4141
- **Metro Cab:** ✆ 415/920-0715
- **Veteran's Cab:** ✆ 415/552-1300
- **Yellow Cab:** ✆ 415/626-2345

office. 1805 Geary Blvd. (at Fillmore St.). ✆ **415/346-6000.** www.livenation.com. Tickets $20–$60.

Fort Mason Center At first glance, this complex, a former military base between Aquatic Park and the Marina Green, looks like a large group of abandoned warehouse buildings. In fact, on any given day the activity level inside is impressive. Besides its collection of museums, galleries, and nonprofit organizations, Fort Mason supports the Cowell Theater, the Herbst Pavilion, the Magic Theater, and the Bayfront Theater. The 437-seat Cowell Theater is the site of performances by local artistic companies such as the Smuin Ballet/SF and the New Pickle Circus. The Magic Theater produces new works by playwrights such as Sam Shepard, and the Bayfront Theater is the site of Bay Area Theatresports, an improvisational group. The Herbst Pavilion is often used for craft fairs, garden shows, and other such events. You can find out what's happening at Fort Mason on its website, or by calling the information line at ✆ **415/345-7544.** Tickets may be purchased through its box office. Marina Blvd., at Buchanan St. ✆ **415/345-7575** (box office; closed Sun–Mon). www.fortmason.org.

San Francisco Entertainment

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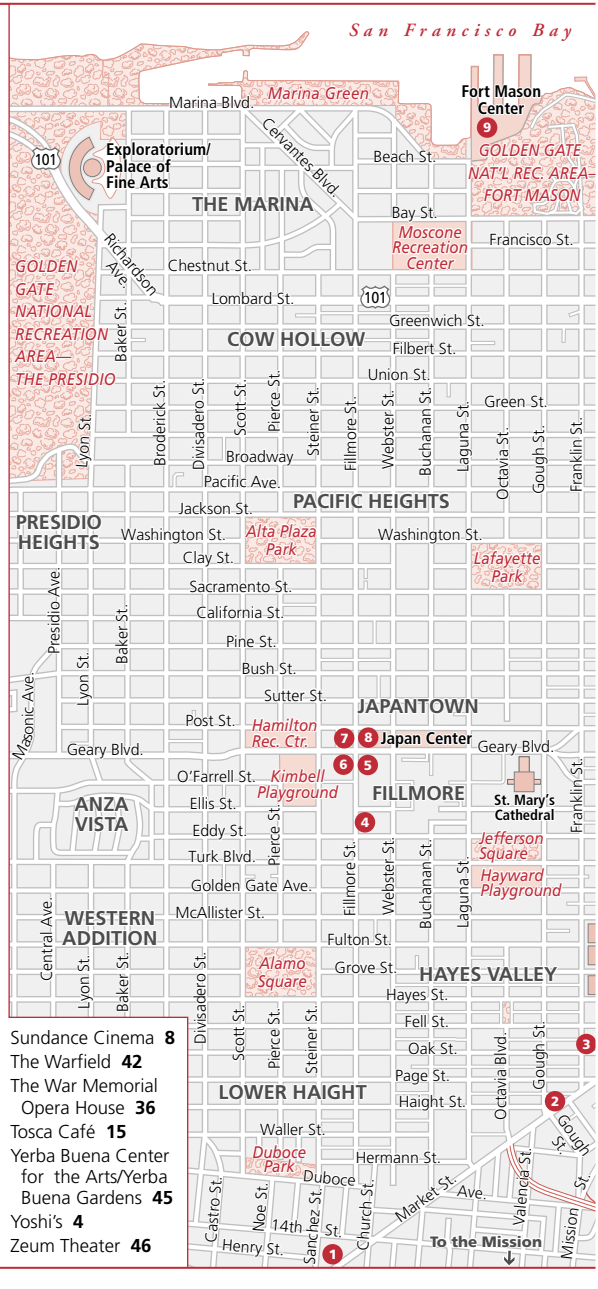

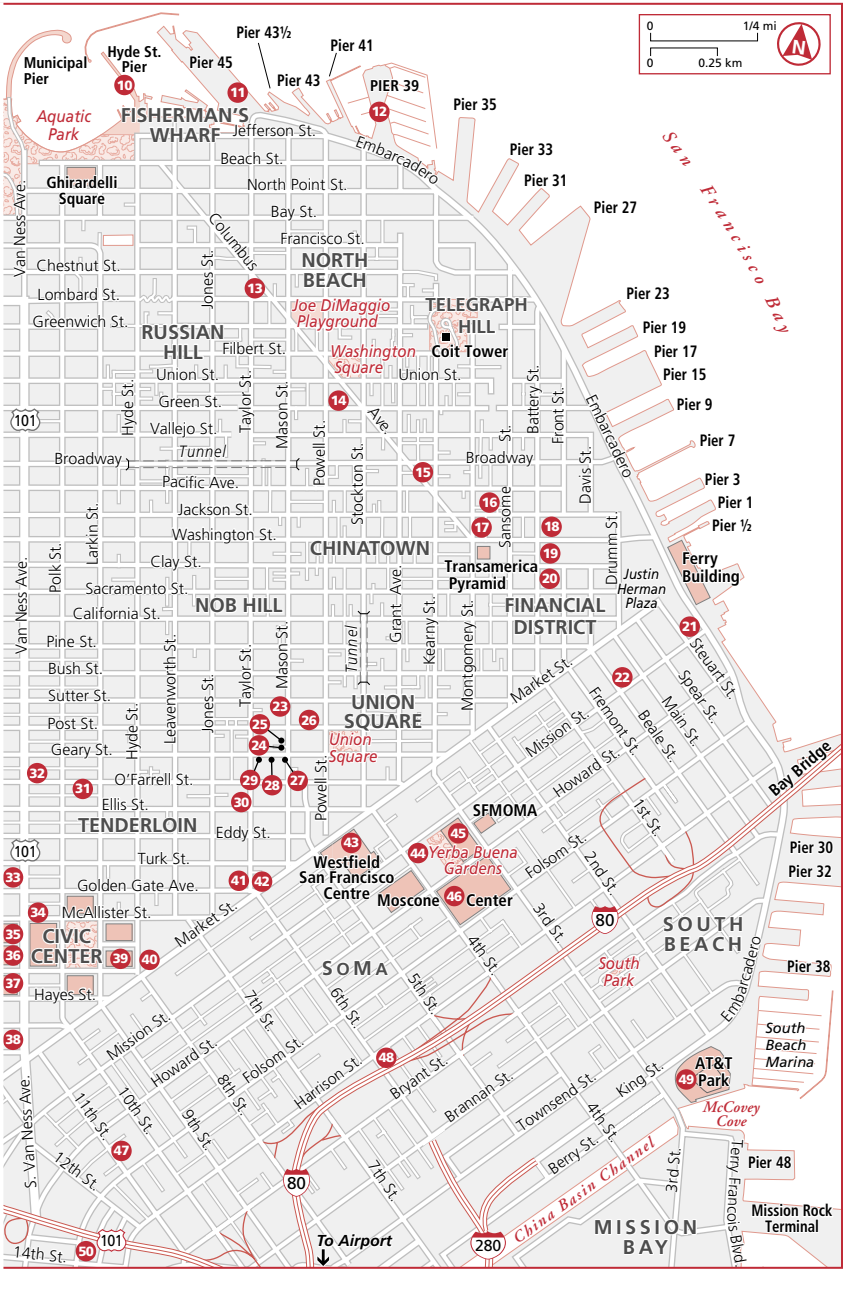
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Aquatic Park
FISHERMAN'S WHARF
Jefferson St.
Embarcadero
San Francisco Bay
Ghirardelli Square
Beach St.
North Point St.
Bay St.
Francisco St.
Van Ness Ave.
Columbus
Jones St.
Chestnut St.
Lombard St.
Greenwich St.
NORTH BEACH
Joe DiMaggio Playground
TELEGRAPH HILL
Coit Tower
RUSSIAN HILL
Filbert St.
Union St.
Green St.
Vallejo St.
Broadway
Tunnel
Pacific Ave.
Jackson St.
Washington St.
Clay St.
Sacramento St.
California St.
Pine St.
Bush St.
Sutter St.
Post St.
Geary St.
O'Farrell St.
Ellis St.
Eddy St.
Turk St.
Golden Gate Ave.
McAllister St.
Hayes St.
Hyde St.
Taylor St.
Mason St.
Leavenworth St.
Larkin St.
Polk St.
Powell St.
Stockton St.
Grant Ave.
Kearny St.
Montgomery St.
Battery St.
Front St.
Sansome St.
Davis St.
Drumm St.
Washington Square
CHINATOWN
NOB HILL
UNION SQUARE
Union Square
FINANCIAL DISTRICT
Transamerica Pyramid
Ferry Building
Justin Herman Plaza
Steuart St.
Spear St.
Main St.
Beale St.
Fremont St.
Market St.
Mission St.
Howard St.
1st St.
Folsom St.
2nd St.
3rd St.
4th St.
Bay Bridge
SFMOMA
Yerba Buena Gardens
Westfield San Francisco Centre
Moscone Center
TENDERLOIN
CIVIC CENTER
SOMA
SOUTH BEACH
South Park
Pier 30
Pier 32
Pier 38
South Beach Marina
AT&T Park
McCovey Cove
Embarcadero
5th St.
6th St.
7th St.
8th St.
9th St.
10th St.
11th St.
12th St.
Harrison St.
Bryant St.
Brannan St.
Townsend St.
King St.
Berry St.
Terry Francois Blvd.
Pier 48
Mission Rock Terminal
MISSION BAY
China Basin Channel
3rd St.
S. Van Ness Ave.
14th St.
To Airport
101
80
280

Golden Gate Theatre See the Curran Theatre above for a description of the shows that play at the Golden Gate Theatre. 1 Taylor St. (at Market St.). ✆ **415/551-2000.** www.shnsf.com. Tickets $40–$65.

Great American Music Hall (GAMH) With the exception of dance shows, kids are welcome at most events here. GAMH's concerts feature local acts, singer/songwriters such as Jane Siberry, and bands such as Galactic. Built as an entertainment palace in 1907 (featuring gambling, dancing, and loose women), it's an impressive space with pillars, rococo touches, and a lovely wraparound balcony. The full kitchen serves throughout the shows. Tickets may be purchased through www.gamhtickets.com, at the box office, by calling ✆ 888/233-0449, or by downloading a ticket order form off the GAMH website and faxing the box office at 415/885-5075. GAMH is not in the best neighborhood. Its next-door neighbor is the Mitchell Bros. XXX Theater, so you might want to take a taxi here. If you're driving, there's parking 1 block toward Van Ness Ave. 859 O'Farrell St. (btw. Polk and Larkin sts.). ✆ **415/885-0750.** www.gamh.com. Tickets start at $12 and vary according to the show.

Herbst Theatre A historic 928-seat jewel inside the Veteran's Building, the Herbst Theatre was the setting for the birth of the United Nations, when Harry Truman signed the charter bringing the U.N. into existence in 1945. The stage is most often used by San Francisco Performances (see below) for classical music concerts and by City Arts and Lectures for conversations between authors and local pundits. Information and tickets to events are available from City Box Office (see the introduction to this chapter). 401 Van Ness Ave. (btw. Hayes and McAllister sts.). ✆ **415/392-4400** (City Box Office). www.sfwmpac.org.

Marines Memorial Theatre This 1927 building once featured national radio broadcasts with the likes of Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra and later became the first home of A.C.T. The small stage now hosts many top-quality local and touring productions, including monologues and plays. Tickets can be purchased by phone or through Ticketmaster. 609 Sutter St. (at Mason St.). ✆ **415/771-6900.** www.marinesmemorialtheatre.com. Tickets $25–$40.

Orpheum Theater See the Curran Theater, above, for a description of the shows that play at the Orpheum. 1192 Market St. (at Hyde and 8th sts.). ✆ **415/551-2000.** www.shnsf.com. Tickets $26–$160.

The Warfield If you find that a musician whom you or your teens really love is playing here, the Warfield is actually a manageable space in which to shepherd the kids. For those who are happier sitting down, the theater balcony has reserved seating. Bands that have played at the Warfield include Cake and Alice in Chains. Tickets may be purchased through Ticketmaster. 982 Market St. (at 6th St.). ✆ **415/345-0900.** www.goldenvoice.com. Tickets $20–$90.

The War Memorial Opera House Arthur Brown, Jr., the architect who designed two exceptional San Francisco landmarks, City Hall and Coit Tower, also designed the Beaux Arts–style War Memorial Opera House. Opened in 1932, it is now home to both the San Francisco Ballet and San Francisco Opera. The 3,200-seat theater was painstakingly retrofitted and updated after suffering damage from the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989. The result was an intrinsically beautiful theater that is also one of the most technically modern in the world. 301 Van Ness Ave. (at Grove St.). ✆ **415/864-3330** (opera tickets) and **415/865-2000** (ballet tickets). www.sfwmpac.org. Tickets $9–$250.

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and Yerba Buena Gardens It's a rare weekend that you can't find something going on at this amazing city cultural center. Better

yet, events in the gardens are free. From May through October in the Esplanade, the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival features outdoor classical, jazz, blues, and gospel music; dance recitals; children's festivals; and lunchtime concerts. 701 Mission St. (at 3rd St.). ✆ **415/978-2787** (box office). www.ybae.org.

OUTSIDE SAN FRANCISCO

Berkeley Repertory Theatre Awarded a Tony for being an "Outstanding Regional Theatre" a decade ago, the Berkeley Rep has continued to thrive since then, sending several of its hit productions to New York in recent years. Occasional performances may be appropriate for kids or teens. 2025 Addison St., Berkeley. (near Shattuck Ave.) ✆ **510/647-2949** (box office). www.berkeleyrep.org.

Hearst Greek Theater This Greek-styled outdoor amphitheatre is the loveliest place in the Bay Area to see a musical performance. The tiered concrete seating and immense stage has capacity for 8,000 fans under an open sky. Having once sat in the last row, I can attest that all seats are good, and the acoustics superb. It gets cold at night, though, so bring jackets. Death Cab for Cutie, R.E.M., Steely Dan, James Taylor, and the Dave Matthews Band were among the recent performers. Off Gayley Rd., UC Berkeley campus,

Berkeley. ✆ **510/809-0100** (Greek Theater information line). For tickets, contact Cal Performances ✆ **510/642-9988;** www.calperfs.berkeley.edu, or Ticketmaster at ✆ **415/421-8497,** or check Another Planet Entertainment at www.apeconcerts.com.

Julia Morgan Center for the Arts The architect Julia Morgan, best known for the Hearst Castle, originally designed this ether eal redwood building in 1908 as a chur ch. Now this community center , named in her honor , offers interactiv e and multicultural dance, music, theater, and educational events for families throughout the year. 2640 College Ave., Berkeley. ✆ **510/845-8542.** www.juliamorgan.org.

Shoreline Amphitheater When the biggest names in music hit the B ay Area, they come to this massive outdoor amphitheater, 35 miles south of San Francisco. With room for mor e than 22,000 people, S horeline also hosts daylong music festiv als. Tickets are sold through Ticketmaster outlets. One Amphitheatre Pkwy., Mountain View. ✆ **650/967-3000.** www.livenation.com.

Zellerbach Hall The major per formance space on the UC B erkeley campus, Zellerbach plays host to an inter esting array of world-class per formers, including the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Bolshoi Ballet, in addition to touring solo artists and theater—all booked b y Cal P erformances. S hows that may inter est kids include Chinese acrobats or J apanese taiko dr ummers. Check out the F amily Fare series on the website. Although season subscribers take the majority of tickets, y ou should be able to score seats if y ou plan in adv ance. Bancroft Way (at Telegraph Ave.). ✆ **510/642-9988.** www.calperfs.berkeley.edu. Tickets $25–$75.

2 SEASONAL EVENTS

Black Nativity **Ages 10 and up.** This stirring annual gospel rendition of the Christmas story, as interpreted by Langston Hughes, is produced at the PG&E Auditorium. 77 Beale St. (near the Embar cadero BART Station, bt w. Market and M ission sts.). ✆ **415/474-8800** (box office). www.lorrainehansberrytheatre.com. Tickets $20–$30.

A Christmas C arol **Ages 5 and up.** The **American Conser vatory Theater** can be relied upon every December to stage this adaptation of the w ell-known tale of Ebenezer Scrooge and the people he hates to lo ve. They always do a fine job of it, too . Geary Theater, 415 Geary St. (at Mason St.). ✆ **415/749-2228.** www.act-sfbay.org. Tickets $25–$80.

Dance-Along Nutcr acker **Ages 4 and up.** S ure, y ou've hear d of the S ing-Along Messiah, but the Dance-Along Nutcracker? An idea whose time has come, this only-in–San Francisco annual event is the brainchild of the S an Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band, and the 50-piece orchestra that provides the music and the tutu r entals. Audience members ar e cued when to twirl, but if y ou'd just rather watch, that 's okay, too . Two afternoon performances are scheduled in early D ecember and take place at Yerba Buena Center for the Ar ts. 701 Mission St. (at 3r d St.). ✆ **415/978-2787.** www.sflgfb.org. Tickets $16–$24.

Deck the Hall **Ages 3 to 10.** Members of the San Francisco Symphony present *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* with puppetr y and narration, follo wed b y post-show par ties featuring arts and crafts activities and r efreshments. The show only has two performances on a single December day. Book well in advance, as this is a very popular event for locals. Davies Symphony Hall. 201 Van Ness Ave. (at Grove St.). ✆ **415/864-6000.** www.sfsymphony.org. Tickets $34.

Music in Parks Series **All ages.** The San Francisco Parks Trust is a nonprofit group that provides support for parks, open space, and city recreation centers. They hold free events at parks around the city to encourage residents to get out of the house. Concerts featuring local musicians are held Saturday afternoons throughout the summer and on Friday nights in September and October. All events are free. ✆ **415/750-5110.** www.sfpt.org.

The Nutcracker **Ages 5 and up.** There's no shortage of Sugar Plum Fairies during Christmas, but the San Francisco Ballet's version of this classic is clearly the best-known and most-beloved in town. The company debuted the piece in 1944 and has been dancing it annually since 1949. It usually runs for about 2 to 3 weeks in December. On selected dates there's a party afterward with appearances by cast members. War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave. (at Grove St.). ✆ **415/865-2000.** www.sfballet.org. Tickets $18–$188.

The Nutcracker by the City Ballet School **Ages 5 and up.** In case the San Francisco Ballet's Nutcracker doesn't fit into your calendar or your budget, a more modest, but delightful, alternative is the City Ballet School's version. The cast is composed almost entirely of students of the ballet school, many of whom are quite good. Cowell Theatre, Fort Mason (Marina Blvd. at Buchanan St.), Middle Pier. ✆ **415/626-8878.** www.cityballetschool.org. Tickets $24.

Peter and the Wolf **Ages 3 to 11.** The San Francisco Youth Symphony Orchestra's annual holiday rendition of Prokofiev's famous piece features celebrity narrators who have included Robin Williams, Bobby McFerrin, and Rita Moreno. The December concert features Christmas carols and a sing-along to end the show. Davies Symphony Hall, 201 Van Ness Ave. (at Grove St.). ✆ **415/864-6000.** www.sfsymphony.org. Tickets $15–$40.

Stern Grove Festival **All ages.** On summer Sundays, families laden with the newspaper, coolers, blankets, and low-rise lawn chairs shuffle into Stern Grove for free concerts in the park. The music begins at 2pm, but savvy locals know to show up early to claim the best spots on the lawn. It's a relaxing and carefree way to spend an afternoon. The lineup usually includes the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Ballet, jazz artists, and students from the San Francisco Opera's Merola Program. Stern Grove, Sloat Blvd. (at 19th Ave.). ✆ **415/252-6252.** www.sterngrove.org.

The Velveteen Rabbit **Ages 5 and up.** Margery Williams's tale of a stuffed bunny that longs to be real is beautifully staged in this modern dance adaptation by **ODC/San Francisco** with music by Benjamin Britten and recorded narration by the actor/clown/comedian Geoff Hoyle. Young audience members have been known to bring along their own well-worn stuffies. Tickets are available through the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts box office. Performances take place in the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater. 700 Howard St. (btw. 3rd and 4th sts.). ✆ **415/978-2787.** www.odcdance.org. Tickets $15–$45.

3 WEEKEND SHOWS

California Palace of the Legion of Honor **Ages 8 and up.** This museum offers weekly organ concerts Saturdays and Sundays at 4pm. Professional organists talk to audience members about their music and about the museum's 1924 Skinner pipe organ, made with 4,500 hidden pipes. Listeners are invited to walk around the elegant marble space to hear how the organ sounds differently depending on where one stands. Lincoln

 Park, 34th Ave. and Clement St. ✆ **415/863-3330.** www.famsf.org/legion. Free with museum admission, which is $10 adults, $7 seniors, $6 youths 12–17, free 11 and under.

Hyde Street Pier **All ages.** The pier holds music-oriented events on alternating Saturdays. The Sea Music Concert Series brings in internationally recognized performers to play instruments and sing historic sailor's songs amidst the antique vessels. Shows are at 8pm and tickets are $14. Best for kids are such no-fee programs like *Chantey Sing,* which invites families to sing traditional working songs aboard the historic ship *Balclutha* a select number of Saturdays in the fall. There's no fee for this event, but reservations are required. Daytime programs include *Music of the Sea for Kids,* which teaches children 6 and up about maritime history through music, and *Chanteying Aboard American Ships,* which explores the African American and Celtic roots of old sea songs. The daytime programs, 2pm on select Saturdays, don't require reservations, but vessel admission is charged. Jefferson St. at Hyde St. ✆ **415/561-6662 ext. 12.** www.nps.gov/safr. Vessel admission: $5 adults, children 15 and under free.

Noe Valley Ministry Music Series **All ages.** Everyone's favorite neighborhood concert hall is actually a treasured 110-year-old Victorian church. Saturday nights are given over to musicians playing a huge range of acoustic music, and the variety of performers is pretty amazing. Jazz, folk, bluegrass, roots, acoustic rock—the Ministry has hosted it all. Tickets go on sale 3 weeks before the performances, which are almost always at 8:15pm on Saturdays. Purchase tickets through **www.tickets.com** (✆ **800/225-2277**) and at **Streetlight Records,** 3979 24th St. in Noe Valley (✆ **415/282-3550**). 1021 Sanchez St. (at 23rd St.). ✆ **415/454-5238.** www.noevalleymusicseries.com. Tickets around $20.

Randall Theater **Ages 4 and up.** Low-cost, high-quality family entertainment is the hallmark at this little theater inside the Randall Museum. At Buddy Club events, you might find magicians and jugglers, singer/songwriters, holiday cabaret, plays, or musicals on select Sundays. Cine Club is a program of classic film screenings for teenagers on Friday nights at 7pm. Tickets may be purchased at the museum on the day of the show. 199 Museum Way (off Roosevelt Way). ✆ **415/554-9600.** www.randallmuseum.org. Tickets $7–$10 for most events.

West Coast Live **Ages 10 and up.** The audience has a great time interacting with Sedge Thomson, the silken-toned host of this live radio show featuring Bay Area authors, artists, comedians, and musical groups. The show travels around these days but does broadcast one Saturday a month from 10am to noon at the Bayfront Theatre at Fort Mason. The shows are popular, so phone for reservations and a schedule. They take place in different San Francisco and Berkeley venues. ✆ **415/664-9500.** www.wcl.org. Tickets $15 adults in advance ($18 at the door), $5 children 17 and under.

4 THEATER

The shows at some of these theaters may or may not be appropriate for kids, depending on what happens to be playing. For theaters that offer one show or the same type of show consistently, I've suggested an age range. For the others, contact the theater to see what's on when you're in town.

42nd Street Moon **Ages 12 and up.** If you're fond of "lost" musicals and early-20th-century songwriters—Rogers and Hart, Cole Porter, the Gershwins, Oscar Hammerstein II—the staged concert versions of shows from the 1920s on up will delight you and,

hopefully, the kids. 42nd Street Moon productions have no sets, minimal staging, and few costume changes, but the music shines brightly. Most shows take place at the Eureka Theater. 215 Jackson St. ✆ **415/255-8207.** www.42ndstmoon.org. Tickets $24–$38.

American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.) One of the finest theatrical companies and schools in the United States, the A.C.T. presents classic, new, and experimental work by playwrights from Shakespeare and Anton Chekhov to David Mamet and Tom Stoppard. Each season usually includes something you can bring the kids to see. The production values, not to mention the acting, are always superb. Tickets are available through the website and the box office, which is open daily noon to curtain time on performance days, and noon to 6pm on nonperformance days. Geary Theater, 415 Geary St. (at Mason St.). ✆ **415/749-2228.** www.act-sfbay.org. Tickets $20–$80.

Bay Area Theatresports (BATS) **Ages 13 and up.** Improvisational theater as sport is BATS's objective. In addition to offering classes, the group performs Friday through Sunday nights at 8pm. You never know exactly what you'll be seeing, which makes improvisational theater exciting and a little bit dangerous, at least for the performers. Bayfront Theater, Fort Mason Center, Building B., Third Floor, Marina Blvd. at Buchanan St. ✆ **415/474-8935.** www.improv.org. Tickets $5–$20.

Beach Blanket Babylon **Ages 10 and up.** For more than 10,000 performances since 1974, BBB has spoofed popular culture, politicians, the famous, and the infamous with actor/singers decked out in architecturally astounding hats and sparkly costumes. The story line—something about Snow White seeking true love—has altered little over the years, but the songs are updated regularly or at least after every election. Due to liquor licensing laws, minors are only allowed for Sunday matinees. Tickets go on sale 6 weeks ahead of time and may be purchased by phoning Club Fugazi at the number listed here. 678 Green St. (a.k.a. Beach Blanket Babylon Blvd.). ✆ **415/421-4222.** www.beachblanketbabylon.com. Sunday matinee $25–$78.

Lamplighters Music Theatre **Ages 8 and up.** Since 1952, the Lamplighters have brought the works of Gilbert and Sullivan and other comic operas to stages around the Bay Area. The shows are great fun, and an excellent way to introduce light opera to the family. The season encompasses productions scattered throughout the year, staged at the theater at Yerba Buena Gardens, Herbst Theatre, Presentation Theater at the University of San Francisco (2350 Turk Blvd. at Masonic Ave.), and the Cowell Theater at Fort Mason, or the. www.lamplighters.org. Tickets are sold through Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (✆ **415/978-2787**) and cost $39–$46 adults, $34–$39 ages 16–29 and seniors 65 and up and $11–$18 kids under 16. Herbst Theatre tickets are sold through City Box Office, ✆ **415/392-4400,** and are $85–$95 adults, $55–$85 seniors and anyone under 29. Presentation Theater tickets are available through its box office at ✆ **415/422-2186,** and are $25 adults and $10 kids under 16. Get Cowell Theater tickets by calling ✆ **415/345-7575;** they run $67–$97 adults and $63–$87 seniors and kids under 16.

Lorraine Hansberry Theatre Showcasing the work of African-American playwrights, this theater group consistently offers a superb season of drama and musical revues between December and May. Get information on performance dates and venues on the website or by calling the box office. 777 Jones St. (administrative offices). ✆ **415/474-8800** (box office). www.lorrainehansberrytheatre.com. Tickets $20–$30.

New Conservatory Theatre Center **Ages 5 and up.** The YouthAware Educational Theatre at the New Conservatory offers theater aimed at educating young people about social issues and encouraging them to make healthier life choices. YouthAware programs

What to Do If You Have a Sitter

If you've been sightseeing with the kids all day and still have enough energy for a night on the town, I'm impressed. If you just want to dine somewhere special, consider **Fleur de Lys** (p. 107). Dinner at this elegant establishment is an unforgettable event in itself, and you'll probably have no time for any post-meal activities. A less extravagant option is friendly, hip **Delfina** (p. 144). When you're done enjoying terrific northern Italian fare here, you'll still have time for some grown-up entertainment, and you'll be steps away from a host of Mission District bars, cocktail lounges, and music and dance clubs. In general, the options for hitting the town are bountiful. Check the listings in the *SF Weekly* or *Bay Guardian,* or on www.sfgate.com/eguide. Since most clubs don't get going until after 10pm, plan to take cabs anywhere not within walking distance of your hotel.

Finding some cool jazz The famed Oakland jazz club **Yoshi's** now has an impressive 28,000-square-foot space in San Francisco on 1330 Fillmore St., at Eddy St. (✆ **415/655-5600;** http://sf.yoshis.com). See jazz greats for about $12 to $30 per ticket; order up some delectable Japanese "pub" fare from the on-site restaurant while you enjoy the show. Another jazz club in the same Fillmore Jazz Preservation District is **Rassela's Jazz Club,** 1534 Fillmore St., at Geary Blvd. (✆ **415/346-8696;** www.rasselasjazzclub.com), a casual, comfortable lounge where you can listen to jazz, Latin rhythms, R&B, or blues, and enjoy snacks from the adjacent Ethiopian restaurant. There's a two-drink minimum weekdays. Weekends after 9pm brings a cover charge of $7.

Blues bars and other live music The **Boom Boom Room,** 1601 Fillmore St., at Geary Street (✆ **415/673-8000;** www.boomboomblues.com), is open every night for dancing, cocktails, and jiving. Lines of ten form on the weekends, so it doesn't hurt to arrive early and sip your drink slowly. Cover charges vary depending on the night and the act. For an eclectic music selection, try **Cafe du Nord,** 2170 Market St., at Sanchez Street (✆ **415/861-5016;** www.cafedunord.com), a basement-level club and restaurant that was once a Prohibition-era speakeasy. The club retains is old-time interiors with paneled walls and a hand-carved mahogany bar. Covers for the experimental and swing bands that play nightly run from $7 to $40.

Dancing **The Endup,** 401 6th St. at Harrison Street (✆ **415/646-0999;** www.theendup.com) has been a fixture of the SF dance scene for years. It's in a sketchy part of town and may be too crazy for some people, but if you want to dance, there's no place better suited to the activity. **Ruby Skye,** 420 Mason St., between Post and Geary streets (✆ **415/693-0777;** www.rubyskye.com), is the biggest dance club in San Francisco, featuring DJs from around the country on weekend nights. Cover charges range from free to $30. **The Ramp,** 855 China Basin, off 3rd Street at Mariposa Street (✆ **415/621-2378;** www.ramprestaurant.com), is an indoor/outdoor bar/restaurant. It isn't open year-round, but between May and October you can dance to live jazz, salsa, and world music on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings at no cover charge—weather permitting.

Swing and ballroom dancers, and those who've never completely let go of their Ginger Rogers fantasies, will adore the **Cheryl Burke Dance Center,** 1830 17th St. (✆ **415/252-9000;** www.cherylburkedance.com). Friday nights are ballroom or swing lessons and parties (with non-alcoholic beverages) and other days of the week feature Argentine tango or salsa. There's a $10 cover charge for just the party, and a $15 charge for the lesson and party.

Drinking in the atmosphere The best place for a summer evening cocktail is the Sky Terrace at **Medjool** (2522 Mission St. at 21st St.; ✆ **415/550-9055;** www.medjoolsf.com). The roof bar at this excellent Mid-Eastern restaurant affords 360° views of the Mission. The crowd is cool but unpretentious, and the *mojitos* are tasty. Also in the Mission District is **Casanova (**527 Valencia St., at 16th St.; ✆ 415/863-9328; www.casanovasf.com) an eclectic bar drawing a good mix of Mission locals and hipsters from around town. There are plenty of other bars in the vicinity of Casanova so you can try more than one. A very grown-up place to have a drink is **Nihon,** at 1779 Folsom St., at 14th St. (✆ **415/552-4400;** www.nihon-sf.com), where the emphasis is high-quality spirits. One of the better wine bars is the ultra-sleek **Cav,** at 1666 Market St., between Franklin and Gough streets. (✆ 415/437-1770; www.cavwinebar.com), featuring fabulous wines from close by and around the world. A cool Art Deco supper club, **Bix,** 56 Gold St., off Montgomery Street between Pacific and Jackson streets in the Financial District (✆ **415/433-6300;** www.bixrestaurant.com), has the best martini in town. Looking to sip a little bubbly instead? Stop by **The Bubble Lounge,** at 714 Montgomery St. at Washington Street (✆ **415/434-4204;** www.bubblelounge.com), and choose from more than 300 champagnes and sparkling wines. The **Redwood Room,** in the überhip Clift Hotel, 495 Geary St., at Jones Street (✆ **415/929-2372;** www.clifthotel.com), is still a popular cocktail lounge. Another alfresco drink can be had at **Americano,** at Hotel Vitale on 8 Mission St. at Embarcadero (✆ **415/278-3777;** www.hotelvitale.com/dining); the patio near the bay is jammed on most warm nights (and even cool ones, since there are plenty of heat lamps) with 20-somethings cool enough to get past the velvet rope. If you'd rather have a drink in a mellow setting, stop by the classic **Tosca Café,** 242 Columbus Ave. at Pacific Street (✆ **415/986-9651**), in North Beach, an understated old-style bar with a long mahogany counter, red-leather-covered stools, and perhaps a local celebrity or two.

Comedy clubs **Cobb's Comedy Club,** 915 Columbus Ave. (✆ **415/928-4320;** www.cobbscomedyclub.com), has two shows nightly Thursday through Sunday for $15 to $43 and a marathon of local comics on Wednesday nights for $10. No one under 16 admitted. Next door to Embarcadero 1 is the **Punchline Comedy Club,** 444 Battery St., between Washington and Clay streets (✆ **415/397-7573;** www.punchlinecomedyclub.com). Locally and nationally known comics play here twice nightly most days of the week. Shows are only open to folks 18 and over, and ticket prices start at $10.

cover topics such as HIV prevention, addiction, and acceptance of diverse communities and cultures. 25 Van Ness Ave. (at Oak St.). ✆ **415/861-8972.** www.nctcsf.org. Performances are either free or low-cost.

Post Street Theatre (formerly Theatre on the Square) Tucked up next to the Kensington Park Hotel, this theater boasts high-caliber, smaller-scale off-Broadway and avant-garde theatrical attractions. This little theater may have something on the boards that you could happily bring your kids to, such as Marcel Marceau, or not. 450 Post St., 2nd floor (bt w. Powell and Mason sts.). ✆ **415/771-6900.** www.poststreettheatre.com. Tickets $25–$85.

Shakespeare in the Park **All ages.** On every weekend in September, the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival presents free performances of popular plays such as *The Tempest, Twelfth Night,* and *Much Ado About Nothing.* Bring your kids, blankets, and picnic baskets, and just show up at the parade grounds in the Presidio at 7:30pm on Saturdays and 2:30pm on Sundays, and 2:30pm on Labor Day. Main Post, The Presidio. ✆ **415/558-0888.** www.sfshakes.org.

A Traveling Jewish Theatre (ATJT) Original works with Jewish themes have been the focus of this 26-year-old ensemble company. Recent plays have included *Death of a Salesman* and *Rose,* which seem geared for more sophisticated audiences. 470 Florida St. (btw. 17th and Mariposa sts.). ✆ **415/522-0786.** www.atjt.com. Tickets $15–$27.

STUDENTS ON STAGE

ACT Young Conservatory A.C.T. uses Zeum's 210-seat theater as a second stage for student and professional productions, as well as in the Garrett Theater, a diminutive theater space on the top floor of the A.C.T. historic theater building. Recent shows included *Charley's Aunt* and *Really Rosie.* If your kids are interested in acting, see if you can arrange a trip when second-year Conservatory students work on scenes from plays by Shakespeare. Zeum Theater, Yerba Buena Gardens, 221 4th St. (at Howard St.). Garrett Theater, 405 Geary St., fifth floor. ✆ **415/749-2228.** www.actactortraining.org (ACT Young Conservatory) or www.zeum.org (Zeum). Tickets $15–$20.

The Marsh Youth Theater Ages 4 and up. Providing theater arts classes to kids ages 4 to 15, the Marsh Youth Theater offers interesting, provocative programs featuring dance, music, and drama. 1062 Valencia St. (near 22nd St.). ✆ **800/838-3006** (tickets) or 415/826-5750 (information). www.themarsh.org/myt.html.

CHILDREN'S THEATER COMPANIES

Young Performer's Theatre **Ages 3 to 8.** A popular birthday party venue, this is a casual theater experience perfect for tots who wouldn't be expected to sit through a lengthy production. This is also a theater school, so the plays feature e youthful actors. Shows are presented Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Fort Mason (Marina Blvd. at Buchanan St.), Landmark Building C, 3rd Floor. ✆ **415/346-5550.** www.ypt.org. Tickets $10 adults, $7 children under 13.

OUTSIDE SAN FRANCISCO

Broadway by the Bay **Ages 5 and up.** In case no family-friendly musical is showing in San Francisco during your visit, try your luck at this community theater about a 15-minute drive from San Francisco. Many of the Bay Area's very talented, semi-retired performers gravitate to this theater company, which produces three musicals with professional sets and costumes during its season from April to October. In 2009 the group will

stage Roger & Hammerstein's *The King and I, The Full Monty,* and *Crazy for You.* San Mateo Performing Arts Center, 600 N. Delaware Ave., San Mateo. ✆ **650/579-5565.** www.broadwaybythebay.org. Tickets $20–$45.

5 CONCERTS

Glide Memorial Church Nationally recognized Reverend Cecil Williams leads Sunday services at this socially active church in the heart of the Tenderloin, featuring rousing gospel choir music. Services start at 9am and 11am, but arrive at least 30 minutes early to get seats. 330 Ellis St. at Taylor St. ✆ **415/674-6000.** www.glide.org.

Pocket Opera Impresario Donald Pippin has been bringing his own, true-to-the-intentions-of-the-composer versions of opera to appreciative audiences for 29 years. The majority is sung in English by professional opera singers accompanied by the Pocket Philharmonic with minimal costumes and virtually no sets, but Pippin gets the point across and makes opera alive and understandable to everyone. He's done more to nurture new audiences for opera than anyone else around. Productions in San Francisco are held Fridays to Sundays at the Florence Gould Theater, Palace of the Legion of Honor (p. 178). ✆ **415/972-8934** (box office). www.pocketopera.org. Tickets $32 adults, $18 children under 18.

San Francisco Conservatory of Music An often overlooked resource for classical music and opera, the Conservatory has been preparing young musicians for professional careers as teachers and performers since 1917. Recitals by students and faculty are given regularly at the school, often with no admission charge. Tickets may be purchased over the phone. 50 Oak Street (at Franklin). ✆ **415/503-6275.** www.sfcm.edu. Tickets $10–$15; some performances are free.

San Francisco Opera One of the world's finest opera companies, the San Francisco Opera's repertoire is generally adult in nature. Outside of bringing schoolchildren around for short programs, it doesn't target youth. Nevertheless, should you be bringing along a young opera enthusiast or a kid who is curious about opera, you could hedge your bets by purchasing standing-room tickets, 200 of which are available for each performance. They are $10 and sold through the box office from 10am on performance days; 50 of them aren't sold until 2 hours before the show starts. Student rush tickets, at $25 if available (phone to inquire), are sold through the box office from 11am until 30 minutes before show time on performance days. Rush tickets are also available for $30 apiece to seniors 65 and up and military personnel with valid ID. The season runs September through July. 301 Van Ness Ave. (at Grove St.). ✆ **415/864-3330.** www.sanfranciscoopera.com. Tickets $35–$195.

San Francisco Performances Along with an October-to-April season of classical music, dance, and ensemble groups like the San Francisco Klezmer Experience, San Francisco Performances offers monthly 2pm matinees specifically for families. They're 1 hour in length, kids of all ages are encouraged to attend, and fidgeting is politely ignored. Concerts are held in various venues around town, including the Herbst Theatre and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. ✆ **415/392-2545.** www.performances.org. Regular tickets $25–$55; family matinee tickets $10–$35.

San Francisco Symphony Currently headed by the distinguished conductor Michael Tilson Thomas, the world-class San Francisco Symphony played its first concert in December 1911. Located in Davies Symphony Hall, the orchestra performs from

All-Ages Music Venues

Here's the lowdown on the handful of places where you can take older children to hear music. At rock clubs, ear plugs are always a good idea, and a good habit for teens to get into before they head off to clubs on their own. The **Great American Music Hall** (p. 252), among the larger clubs, is the most physically comfortable. It has tables and chairs and a full menu. As in every club, the type of crowd drawn depends on the act, but aged Dead-Heads and folkies are the norm here. Shows generally begin at 8pm, so you won't want to bring sleepyheads with you. The **Warfield** (p. 252) and the **Fillmore** (p. 248) are similar kinds of halls, both in dodgy sections of town. They draw youngish crowds that might intimidate some kids, so I'd think twice before bringing kids under 16 to either place. At least at the Fillmore, you can hang out and watch the show from the balcony, since almost everyone else will be on the main floor. A smaller club that's both comfortable and cool for kids is **Slim's** (333 11th St.; ✆ **415/255-0333;** www.slims-sf.com). Bands tend to be small national acts, locals, and up-and-comers. The best way to enjoy an evening here with kids is to buy dinner tickets, which give your party seating on the upstairs balcony. The food is simple—quesadillas, burgers, potato skins—but it's better than standing (dinner tickets cost $20, plus the regular show ticket price). Tickets for shows start at only $12 and top out at under $30. Some shows at **Café du Nord** (see "What to Do If You Have a Sitter" box, earlier in this chapter) are open to under-21s.

Two other all-ages clubs won't impress the kids with how hip you've become, but if you like jazz, they are worth checking out. Near Union Square in a basement is **Biscuits and Blues** (401 Mason St.; ✆ **415/292-2583;** www.biscuitsandblues.com). Local jazz and blues musicians are often on tap. The Southern-style food is just okay, but there's a children's menu, and dinner patrons get the best seats. For classier premises and straight-ahead jazz, check

October to early May. Programming includes a "Music for Families" series, which consists of Saturday afternoon concerts for kids 7 and older held four times a season, annual holiday concerts, and a Chinese New Year's matinee concert featuring Asian instruments and music. On select Wednesdays at 10am you can view featured musicians in open rehearsals, but you must buy tickets for the privilege. Davies Symphony Hall, 201 Van Ness Ave. (at Grove St.). ✆ **415/864-6000.** www.sfsymphony.org and www.sfskids.org. Music for Families concert tickets $10–$55, half-price for children under 13. Open rehearsal tickets $20 and $30.

San Francisco Youth Symphony Orchestra If you've wondered where the kids who actually practice end up, make every attempt to see this award-winning ensemble of 12- to 21-year-old virtuosos. They play Saturday matinees in November, March, and May; present *Peter and the Wolf* in an annual winter holiday concert; and perform occasional special concerts. Tickets are available through the box office or website. Davies Symphony Hall, 201 Van Ness Ave. (at Grove St.). ✆ **415/864-6000.** www.sfsymphony.org. Tickets $10 and $25.

out **Yoshi's** (see the "What to Do If You Have a Sitter" box). you're coming with kids (teens, I hope) to Jazz at Pearl's, view the earlier show. **Yoshi's** has 2pm matinees on Sunday—featuring such great as Gato Barbieri and Charlie Hunter—with prices for children under 15 as low as $5, and discounts for parents who bring their kids. Doors open at 1pm.

Some of the most family-oriented clubs are across the Bay Bridge. In Berkeley, **Ashkenaz** (1317 San Pablo Ave.; ✆ **510/525-5054;** www.ashkenaz.com) is *the* place for world music and dance. On some Sunday afternoons, 1-hour shows for kids are held. These may be live music and dancing, puppet shows, Klezmer, or music with an international flair. Tickets, $4 for kids and $6 for adults, may be purchased at the door. **The Freight & Salvage** (1111 Addison St., Berkeley; ✆ **510/548-1761;** www.freightandsalvage.com) does not serve alcohol, so there's never any question about under-21s attending shows. A coffeehouse that will take you back to your pre-Starbucks college days, this intimate club is great for folk, Cajun, and blues musicians, some local and some touring. Tickets are $4.50 to $31; children under 12 years of age are admitted at half-price. At Yoshi's in Oakland, **Yoshi's** jazz club and Japanese restaurant's original location, the Sunday family matinees have been introducing Bay Area kids the children to jazz legends for three decades. Tickets are $5 for kids under 15 and $20 for adults (only $18 for parents with kids). Lunch is offered starting at 1pm, and a kids' menu is available. The club is at Jack London Square, 510 Embarcadero West, Oakland (✆ **510/238-9200;** www.yoshis.com). The best way to reach the club for matinees is on the Alameda/Oakland ferry, which drops you off across the street. For ferry information and schedules, phone ✆ **510/522-3300** or check www.eastbayferry.com.

6 MOVIES

There's no shortage of multi-screen theaters in town, all playing the latest Hollywood blockbusters. You can find a complete listing of theaters and films with playing times online at www.sfgate.com. The movie theaters listed below are those that are particularly easy to reach by public transportation or on foot from Union Square.

AMC Loews Metreon 15 With nine restaurants, 15 state-of-the-art screens, and an IMAX theater, you've got dining and entertainment choices to suit everyone in the family. 101 4th St. (at Mission St.). ✆ **415/369-6201.** www.amctheatres.com. Tickets $8 child, $9 adult.

AMC 1000 Van Ness This 14-screen theater on Van Ness is convenient to downtown but has only a handful of nearby dining options. 1000 Van Ness Ave. at O'Farrell St. ✆ **800/231-3307.** www.amctheatres.com. Tickets $7.75 child, $9.75 adult.

Century San Francisco Centre 9 This brand-new theatre complex is inside the new Westfield San Francisco Centre above Bloomingdale's. 865 Market St. at 5th St. ✆ **415/538-3456.** www.cinemark.com. Tickets $7.50 child, $11 adult.

Sundance Cinema This eight-screen theater is located in Japantown, which makes dinner and a major release very simple. 1881 Post St. at Fillmore St. ✆ **415/929-4650.** www.sundancecinemas.com. Tickets $7.50 child, $11 adult.

ART, FOREIGN & EXPERIMENTAL FILMS

Castro Theatre This 1922 Art Deco structure designed by Timothy Pfleuger is a true movie palace, with its own "Mighty Wurlitzer Organ" that's played on special occasions. The theater shows classic motion pictures and hosts many film festivals, including "Godzillafest" and an independent cinema festival. The Children's Classic Film Festival may feature such films as the original *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* and includes live entertainment, a raffle, and goody bags. Check the website for upcoming special occasions. Tickets may be purchased in advance through Ticketweb.com. 429 Castro St. (between 17th and 18th sts.). ✆ **415/621-6120.** www.castrotheatre.com. Tickets $7 child, $9.50 adult.

Embarcadero Center Cinema This is a great spot for stellar foreign-language films, first-rate indie films, and award-winning documentaries. 1 Embarcadero Center (at Battery and Sacramento sts.). ✆ **415/267-4893.** www.landmarktheatres.com. Tickets $11 adults, $8.25 children.

Opera Plaza Cinema Belonging to the same theater group as the Embarcadero Center, this small cineplex offers an alternative to Hollywood fare, with excellent foreign and independent films. You'll want to take a cab here in the evenings, but at least it's close to Union Square. 601 Van Ness Ave. (btw. Golden Gate and Turk sts.). ✆ **415/267-4893.** www.landmarktheatres.com. Tickets $8 child, $10 adult.

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts The YBCA screening room features experimental and alternative films and documentaries. Once in a while, some of these are suitable for kids and their parents, too. 701 Mission St. (btw. 3rd and 4th sts.). ✆ **415/978-2700.** www.ybca.org/film. Tickets $6 child, $8 adult.

MOVIES FOR KIDS

Randall Museum Cine Club **Ages 13 to 18.** Classic films like *Fanny & Alexander* and *The Piano* are shown in the comfortable Randall Theater on Friday evenings at 7pm. Refreshments are served at 6:30pm, and a discussion follows the film. 199 Museum Way (off Roosevelt Way). ✆ **415/864-2026.** www.chaseartfilm.com. Free admission.

San Francisco Public Library Along with story times, many branch libraries screen films for preschoolers. At the Main Library, films are shown on Saturdays at 11am and on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 10 and 10:45am. For other times, see "Story Hours," below, or check the library's website. All events are free. 100 Larkin St. (at Grove St.). ✆ **415/557-4554.** www.sfpl.org.

OUTDOOR CINEMA

Film Night in the Park From May to October, several parks throughout Bay Area become outdoor cinemas for the evenings; San Francisco parks include Dolores Park, Union Square, and Washington Square Park. Kid-friendly choices in the past have included *The Wizard of Oz* and *Wallace and Gromit.* Entrance is free although a donation of $6 per adult and $3 per child is appreciated. Various locations. ✆ **415/453-4333.** www.filmnight.org. Free admission.

7 DANCE

Alonzo King's LINES Ballet **Ages 5 and up.** Founded by ballet master Alonzo King, LINES blends classical and contemporary ballet accompanied by music from the world's greatest living composers. This is a touring ballet company based in San Francisco and performs at the Novellus Theater at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Novellus Theater, 700 Howard St. (btw. 3rd and 4th sts.) ✆ **415/863-3040.** www.linesballet.org.

San Francisco Ballet **Ages 10 and up.** One of the country's finest ballet companies, the San Francisco Ballet officially begins its season in February and ends in May. (See "Seasonal Events," earlier in this chapter, for the ballet's annual *Nutcracker* production.) Productions are geared toward grown-ups, although serious dance lovers of any age will thrill to see these graceful creatures on stage. Tickets may be purchased through the website, by telephone, and at the box office (open on performance days only). War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave. (at Grove St.). ✆ **415/865-2000.** www.sfballet.org. Tickets $9–$250.

Smuin Ballet/SF **Ages 10 and up.** Smuin Ballet performances draw less on classical movements and more on theatricality, using music by composers like Elton John and the Beatles that give the pieces a modern spin. Smuin Ballet appears at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Tickets may be purchased through either the Yerba Buena box office or **www.tickets.com**. 700 Howard St. (btw. 3rd and 4th sts.) ✆ **415/978-2787.** www.smuinballet.org. Tickets $40–$55.

8 CIRCUS SHOWS

Acrosports City Circus **All ages.** The performance troupe from Acrosports is composed of highly skilled circus performers from 11 to 21 years old who are experts in tumbling, hand balancing, contortion, aerial ropes, juggling, and more. They perform 2-week stints twice a year at venues like the Brava Theatre in the Mission. ✆ **415/665-2276.** www.acrosports.org.

Pickle Circus and San Francisco Youth Circus **Ages 5 and up.** These two groups encompass the performance division of Circus Center San Francisco (p. 223), a professional training school for circus performers. The Pickle Circus started out in San Francisco in 1974 as The Pickle Family Circus, pioneers in creating intimate, vaudeville-like shows that highlight juggling, trapeze, and clowning, but shun the expected, including animal acts. Not glitzy like Cirque du Soleil but certainly in the same vein, Pickle Circus shows tell stories set to original music. The company performs an annual holiday show at the Palace of Fine Arts Theater (3301 Lyon St.). The San Francisco Youth Circus performs at two yearly fundraisers and occasionally at venues around town. For dates, log onto the website or phone the Circus Center for information. ✆ **415/759-8123.** www.circuscenter.org. Tickets $5–$45.

9 SPECTATOR SPORTS

Giants Baseball If you are at all interested in the boys of summer, you should get tickets for a game in AT&T Park. The stadium is lovely, with stunning views, good food, a walkway on the bay, a terrific play area for kids, and generally fine weather.

Take Me Out to the Ballpark

Baseball fanatics can take a "backstage" tour of the ballpark, a terrific 75-minute guided walk (covering about 2 miles, including stairs) that takes in the luxury skyboxes, the dugout, the arcade level, and the visiting team clubhouse (locker rooms). The guides are fun and knowledgeable about baseball in general and the Giants in particular. You'll see great vintage photos from the days when the San Francisco Seals were the hometown team, before the Giants moved to San Francisco from New York. If your kids aren't passionate about baseball, the tour could drag. Take them instead to play at the **Coca-Cola Fan Lot** (see "Parks & Playgrounds" in chapter 8) any nongame day. Enter from the Seals gate on the plaza facing the bay.

Kids are allowed to run the bases after every Sunday home game. You needn't have a ticket, but you must be under 13. The line forms to the right of the Giants Dugout store, which is also where tours start.

For more information, call ✆ **415/972-2400.** Tours are at 10:30am and 12:30pm every day except day games scheduled at AT&T Park. Tickets $10 adults, $6 children 2–12, $8 seniors, under 2 free. Purchase tickets at any Giants Dugout Store or online at **www.tickets.com**.

Fanatics and businesses snapped up season tickets before the opening of the stadium in 2000, but there are ways to procure seats. On game days, bleacher seats are available at the stadium box office. The club also facilitates ticket sales between season subscribers and ticketless fans through the Double Play Ticket Window on the Giants website. These tickets won't necessarily be sold at face value, and you'll be charged an extra 10% of the ticket price for the privilege of using the service, but it's safer than buying from a scalper. Another excellent resource for tickets is www.craigslist.com (see "San Francisco 49ers," below). 24 Willie Mays Plaza, 2nd and King sts. ✆ **415/972-2000.** http://sanfrancisco.giants.mlb.com. Tickets $10–$120.

Golden State Warriors The professional basketball season runs from October through April, and tickets are available through Ticketmaster or at the box office. Family weekend packages, which offer considerable savings, are worth looking into. Oakland Coliseum, 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. ✆ **510/986-2200.** www.nba.com/warriors. Tickets $10–$90. BART: Fremont/Richmond line to Coliseum/Airport exit.

Oakland Athletics The Bay Area's American League team plays at the Network Associates Stadium, aka the Oakland Coliseum or Arena. Tickets should be easy to obtain directly through the box office, unless the team becomes a contender for a title. 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. ✆ **510/568-5600.** http://oakland.athletics.mlb.com. Tickets $9–$55. Check website or www.stubhub.com, the official site for season ticket holders to resell their seats to the general public, to purchase tickets. BART: Fremont/Richmond line to Coliseum/Airport exit.

Oakland Raiders You should be aware that Raiders football games aren't regarded as very family-friendly affairs. Non-Raiders fans have had their cars trashed, and excessive swearing and fighting in the stands is standard operating procedure. The team plays at

the Oakland Coliseum. 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. ✆ **800/724-3377.** www.raiders.com. Single tickets are $36–$161 and can be purchased through Ticketmaster by phone ✆ **510/625-8497** or at www.ticketmaster.com. BART: Fremont/Richmond line to Coliseum/Airport exit.

San Francisco Bay Area Pro-Am Summer Basketball From June through early August, current and retired college, high school, and professional basketball players mix it up in this 28-year-old league at Kezar Pavilion, at Stanyan and Waller streets, near Golden Gate Park. The level of play on the men's and women's teams is mighty. It's also a bargain: Games are free. The men's league plays at 8pm on game days; the women shoot at noon, 2pm, and 4pm. www.sanfranciscoproam.com.

San Francisco 49ers It's a party whenever the 49ers are playing at Monster Park. The hard-core tailgate galas start as early as 9am with elaborate barbecues, tents, lots of beer, and camaraderie among fans who have been following the team for years. In fact, season tickets have been passed from parents to kids since this football team played at Kezar Stadium back in the '50s. You can't buy single tickets at the box office—all games are sold out. However, you can go to the stadium a few hours before game time and try your luck buying tickets from people in the parking lot who have extras. A better alternative may be to log onto the website www.craigslist.com. Craigslist is a San Francisco–based community bulletin board that's been hugely successful in connecting people with jobs, housing, and 49ers tickets. San Francisco 49ers, Monster Park. ✆ **415/464-9377.** www.sf49ers.com. Single tickets (if available) are $59–$113 and can be purchased through Ticketmaster by phone or www.ticketmaster.com.

San Jose Sharks Hockey fans will be pleased to know that the "Shark Tank" is less than an hour away from San Francisco. The Sharks have a dedicated fan base and the team has been going up the ranks every season. HP Pavilion, 525 West Santa Clara St., San Jose. ✆ **408/287-7070.** www.sjsharks.com. Ticket are $20–$175 (family packs are available). CALTRAIN: San Francisco to San Jose Diridon station.

10 STORY HOURS

California Academy of Sciences **Ages 3 to 7.** Story time is held every Saturday at 10:30am and is free with museum admission. 55 Music Concourse Dr. (in Golden Gate Park between John F Kennedy Sr. and South Dr.). ✆ **415/379-8000.** www.calacademy.org.

The Randall Museum **Ages 3 to 7.** There's a lot going on at the Randall on a typical Saturday, including animal story hour at 11:30am. The Randall is a good place for families with kids in different age groups since projects and events for toddlers to 12-year-olds all take place under one roof. Drop in Tuesdays through Saturdays at the brand-new Tree House Toddler Exploration Zone, where kids can do arts and crafts, science activities, and play in the climbing structure. 199 Museum Way (off Roosevelt Way). ✆ **415/554-9600.** www.randallmuseum.org. Free admission (donations accepted).

San Francisco Public Library **All ages.** The Main Library in the Civic Center includes the Fisher Children's Center, a spacious children's room with exhibits, a space for films and special events, computers, and books for kids up to 13 years old. Tuesday mornings from 10:30 to 11:30am and Saturday mornings from 11am to noon is family story time, appropriate for all ages. The library's website publishes a list of events for all branches, including story hours, concerts, and films. All events are free. The Main Library is open Sunday from noon to 5pm, Monday from 10am to 6pm, Tuesday to

Thursday from 9am to 8pm, Friday from noon to 6pm, and Saturday from 10am to 6pm. 100 Larkin St. (at Grove St.) ✆ **415/557-4400.** www.sfpl.org.

In addition to the main library, branch libraries all over the city offer story hours for kids. I've listed those that are easy for visitors to reach on foot or by Muni streetcars or buses:

- **Chinatown Branch** Preschool story time is on Tuesdays at 11am and family story time is on Saturdays at 10:30am. 1135 Powell St. (near Jackson St.) ✆ **415/355-2888.** Muni: 30-Stockton or Powell-Mason or Powell-Hyde cable cars to Jackson St.
- **Eureka Valley/Harvey Milk Memorial Branch** The Eureka Valley branch was closed for remodeling at press time. 1 Jose Maria Court (on between Sanchez and Noe sts.). ✆ **415/355-5616.** Muni: F-Market streetcar to 16th St.
- **Marina Branch** Mondays offer story time for toddlers 18 months to 3 at 10:15am. Tuesdays at 10:15am is story time for preschoolers ages 3 to 5 and 11am for newborns to 18 months. 1890 Chestnut St. (at Webster St.). ✆ **415/355-2823.** Muni: 30-Stockton to Webster St.
- **Mission Branch** Songs and playtime for babies and crawlers are offered Mondays at 1pm. Story time for preschoolers is Wednesdays at 10:15am, and a bilingual Spanish and English story time for infants and toddlers is onThursdays at 10:10am. 451 Jersey St. (near Castro St.). ✆ **415/355-5707.** Muni: F-Market to Castro St. and transfer to 24-Divisadero. Or BART to 24th St. station and transfer to 48-Quintara; walk 1 block south to Jersey St. and 3½ blocks east.
- **Noe Valley Branch** Tuesday mornings infants and toddlers enjoy story time at 10:15am; preschoolers listen in at 11am. 451 Jersey St. (near Castro St.). ✆ **415/355-5707.** Muni: F-Market to Castro St. and transfer to 24-Divisadero. Or BART to 24th St. station and transfer to 48-Quintara; walk 1 block south to Jersey St. and 3½ blocks east.
- **North Beach Branch** Infant/toddler lap-sit is on Thursdays at 10:15am and story time for 3- to 5-year-olds is at 11am. 2000 Mason St. (at Columbus Ave.). ✆ **415/355-5626.** Muni: Powell-Mason cable car to Columbus. 30-Stockton to Mason St.
- **Presidio Branch** On Tuesday and Thursday mornings the "Young and Restless" program features books, songs, and movement for kids ages 1 to 3. Saturdays at 10:15am the "Baby Bounce" focuses on pre-readers aged 0 to 1. 3150 Sacramento St. (near Baker St.). ✆ **415/355-2880.** Muni: L-Taraval streetcar to 22nd Ave.

Strybing Arboretum **Ages 4 to 8.** Docents at this beautiful botanical garden combine a Sunday morning children's story with a guided walk. This is an ongoing program on the first and third Sundays of the month starting at 10:30am. Best for kids aged 4 to 8. 9th Ave. and Lincoln Way in Golden Gate Park. ✆ **415/661-1316.** www.sfbotanicalgarden.org. Free admission.

11 ARCADES

Musée Mécanique **All ages.** Open daily, this fun arcade has penny arcade machines, fortune tellers, games of skill, and beautifully restored antique mechanical musical instruments. Pier 45 (at Taylor St.). ✆ **415/346-2000.** www.museemechanique.org.

Riptide Arcade **Ages 8 and up.** With 100-plus video games, virtual-reality units, and even a shooting gallery on offer, you run the risk of losing your hearing and a lot of quarters in this loud, dark room. PIER 39. ✆ **415/981-6300.** www.riptidearcade.com.

OUT OF TOWN

Malibu Grand Prix **Ages 6 and up.** About 25 minutes south of San Francisco, Malibu Grand Prix gets the blood moving for kids with Indy-style 3/4-scale cars that they can race on a 1/2-mile track. When that gets old, there are batting cages, a game room, and miniature golf. 320–340 Blomquist St., Redwood City. ✆ **650/366-6463.** www.malibugrandprix.com. Directions: 101 S. to Seaport Blvd./Woodside Rd., stay left and turn east on Seaport Blvd. and left on Blomquist St.

11

Side Trips from San Francisco

San Francisco offers so much to see and do that visiting families could easily spend several days within city limits. But the fact remains that San Francisco is nestled in one of the most scenic corners of the world—with stunning natural beauty, world-class vineyards, and lovely national parks just a stone's throw away. Add to that its proximity to the East Bay cities of Berkeley and Oakland, both rich in family-friendly attractions, and you have a good excuse to hop on the BART or rent a car to explore further afield.

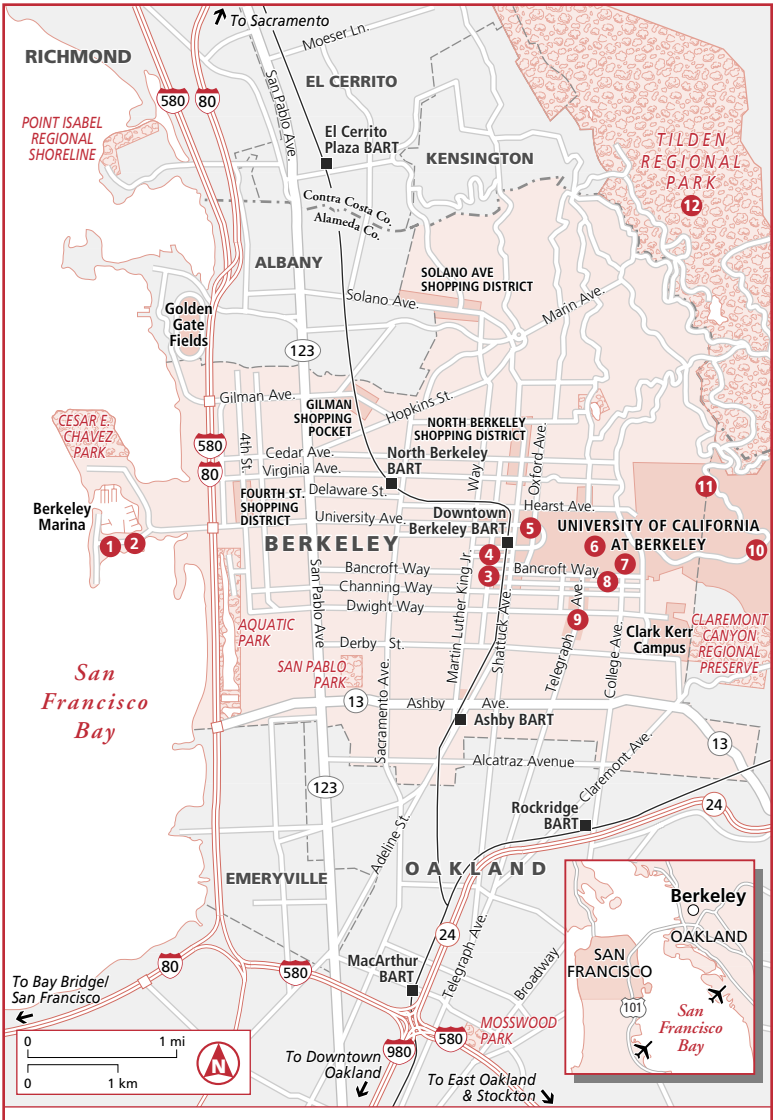
The big decision may be which way to go. Berkeley is so easily accessible by BART, there is almost no reason not to go, but some other East Bay attractions are more easily reached by car. If it's the great outdoors you seek, look no further than the Point Reyes National Seashore—certain to be a highlight of your trip to the Bay Area. Or, like many San Francisco visitors, you may have your heart set on visiting the wine country. While this may not be an intrinsically child-centered outing, even in Napa Valley you can find activities that will appeal to youngsters.

1 BERKELEY

In 25 minutes, the BART will take you from Market Street to downtown Berkeley. When you emerge, you'll be in a different world. Berkeley is warmer, sunnier, and more wooded than San Francisco. Its Bohemian character is also palpable. Berkeley's spirit of idealism, in full swing when the University of California Berkeley was a focal point of 1960s student protests, persists today, even as the city takes in more families fleeing real estate prices in San Francisco. On the university campus and in Tilden Park, you'll find some terrific activities for kids. Teens will enjoy strolling down Telegraph Avenue and may even be inspired by a campus tour to start thinking about college. For the whole family, Berkeley is also a delightful place to eat and shop.

EXPLORING BERKELEY

Adventure Park and Playground **Ages 4 and up.** A fenced outdoor workshop/playground, this unusual park is heaven for any child whose idea of a good time involves a hammer, some nails, and a pile of wood. It's located at the Berkeley Marina, which offers several great options for a day outdoors, including Cesar Chavez Park, where you can picnic or fly kites, and the Shorebird Park Nature Center (see below). At the Adventure Park, with the help of students from UC Berkeley, kids are encouraged to create and build whatever they want, sawing and painting as they see fit. They can climb on towers and ships and play in shacks and other structures designed and assembled by fellow builders. They can also zip down a cable with the help of a pulley slide and play on a jungle gym made out of automobile tires. The playground is designed for kids 7 and up,



Adventure Park and Playground **2**
The Berkeley Hall of Health **3**
Habitot's Children's Museum **4**
Hearst Museum of Anthropology **7**
Lawrence Hall of Science **11**
Sather Tower **6**
Shorebird Nature Center **1**
Telegraph Avenue **9**
Tilden Park **12**
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University Art Museum **8**
Visitor Information Center **5**

but younger kids are also welcome as long as they stay within arm's reach of their parents. The park is so popular that groups arriving with 5 or more children must reserve well ahead of time (3 weeks or more) and pay a fee, starting at $55 for 2 hours.

Berkeley Marina (south of University Ave.). ✆ **510/981-6720.** www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/marina/marinaexp/adventplgd.html. Free for children supervised by a parent/guardian; on Sat kids over 7 can be dropped off unaccompanied for a 3-hr. session for $7. Weekends and school holidays 11am–4pm; summer weekdays 9am–5pm. Closed when raining and also Dec 24–26 and Dec 31– Jan 1. Phone to confirm. **To get there:** By car: Take I-80 to Powell St. Make a left under the freeway and a right onto Frontage Rd. Follow Frontage Rd. to University Ave. Take a left onto University and follow the signs for the marina.

The Berkeley Hall of Health **Ages 3 to 12.** Located across the street from Habitot (see below), The Berkeley Hall of Health is an interactive museum designed to teach children about the human body, nutrition, and health. The museum includes hands-on exhibits on the human heart, the inside of the body, and how to prevent diseases.

2230 Shattuck Ave., lower level. ✆ **510/549-1564.** www.hallofhealth.org. Suggested donation $3 per person, children under 3 free. Tues–Sat 10am–4pm. **To get there:** By BART: Exit at the Berkeley station; walk 1 block south to the museum. By car: Take I-80 to the University Ave. exit. Drive east (toward the hills) until you reach Shattuck Ave. Take a right on Shattuck and another right on Kittredge St. There is parking in the garage across from the main entrance.

Habitot Children's Museum **Ages infant to 7.** A hands-on exhibition center, Habitot helps children develop and explore creative and interactive skills that they will use for life. This delightful museum provides opportunities to explore art, science, history, architecture, and technology through several exhibits. Each gallery offers a specific, age-appropriate activity. At **Waterworks,** kids can experience different types of water activity: a flowing river ramp, a pumping station, and a water table. The **Little Town Grocery & Cafe** provides a miniature shopping experience with kid-size shopping carts and plastic fruits, vegetables, and breads that kids can also sort themselves into grocery bins. Cash registers with working buttons and play money help them practice counting and encourage interactive play. The **Infant-Toddler Garden,** designed for crawlers, has carpeted walls depicting a garden mural landscape and interactive activities including a carrot patch, a pretend pond, and shapes to Velcro to the wall—all surrounded by a white picket fence. At the **Drop-in Art Studio,** kids of all ages can paint or draw their own wall murals, participate in various organized art activities, or create their own masterpieces on paper. A **Wiggle Wall** allows children to feel their way through an "underground" labyrinth. The **Rocketship** exhibit, which occasionally travels to other children's museums, allows aspiring astronauts to don astronaut costumes, manipulate the mission control panel, and contemplate their futures in outer space. Habitot has kiddy cars and toys available to play with, offers special outreach programs to neighborhood families with special needs, and works closely with the Head Start program.

2065 Kittredge St. (near Shattuck Ave.), Berkeley. ✆ **510/647-1111.** www.habitot.org. Admission $8 children, $7 adults, under 12 months free. Mon–Thurs 9:30am–12:30pm; Fri–Sat 9:30am–4:30pm; Sun (Oct–Mar only) 9:30am–4:30pm. Closed major holidays and Sun Apr–Sept. **To get there:** See "The Berkeley Hall of Health," above. The entrance to the museum is on the lower level of the parking garage.

Shorebird Park Nature Center **Ages 4 to 12.** Here families can learn about San Francisco Bay ecology. Exhibits include a 100-gallon aquarium featuring marine plants and animals found in the San Francisco Bay. There are several wildlife displays to see and explore as well as a touch table, where kids can gently handle different species of marine life.

Berkeley Marina (east of the Adventure playground). ✆ **510/981-6720.** www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/marina/marinaexp/naturecenter.html. Sat 9am–5pm; Mon-Fri 9am–5pm, unless classes are in session, in which case it opens at 1pm. Free admission. **To get there:** By car: Take I-80 to Powell St. Make a left under the freeway and a right onto Frontage Rd. Follow Frontage Rd. to University Ave. Take a left onto University and follow the signs for the marina.

Tilden Park **All ages.** This 2,077-acre woodland park, which opened in the Berkeley hills in 1936, is home to numerous hiking and horseback riding trails, several picnic areas, and fields for playing Frisbee or just running around. For those needing mental stimulation, the **Environmental Education Center,** open Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 5pm, has a man-made canyon cavern that shows various species of wildlife that can be found around the park. Microscopes are available for getting a close-up look at the life within the park's lakes and ponds.

Just beyond the education center is the **Little Farm,** open daily from 8:30am to 4pm, where kids can pet sheep, donkeys, cows, and other animals. Tilden Park is famous for the **Steam Train,** a scaled-down version of a real steam train that travels around the edge of the park through a miniature town, over bridges, and through tunnels (✆ **510/548-6100;** www.redwoodvalleyrailway.com; open 11am–6pm daily in summer and weekends and holidays during the school year, except Thanksgiving and Christmas; rides $2 each or 5 for $8, kids under 2 free). The **Herschell-Spillman Merry-Go-Round** is an antique carousel with features like hand-carved wooden frogs, lions, and giraffes (✆ **510/524-6773;** open 11am–5pm daily in summer and weekends and holidays during the school year; rides $2 per person, regardless of age). The carousel closes for the month of November until the day after Thanksgiving, when it reopens nightly from 5:30 to 8:30pm through December 23. Families visiting in the warm weather months can spend the afternoon swimming and sunning at **Lake Anza,** right in the center of the park. You can park nearby or hike to the lake area, where the facilities include changing rooms, showers, and, in the summer, lifeguards. There is a small snack bar open during the summer as well.

Another interesting area is **Jewel Lake,** a marshy wetland with lots of animals and birds, including ducks, squirrels, and turtles. Watch out for the poison oak. If you are around after a rain, you might see some California newts. Jewel Lake is not open for swimming.

For families interested in learning more about California's flowers and plant life, the **Regional Parks Botanic Garden** in Tilden Park is a lovely place to explore (visit www.nativeplants.org for more information). It's open daily from 8:30am to 5pm, except major holidays.

✆ **510/562-7275.** www.ebparks.org/parks/tilden. Daily 5am–10pm. **To get there:** By car: Take I-80 to the Buchanan St. exit. Go east and stay to the right; Buchanan turns into Marin Ave. Follow Marin to Grizzly Peak Blvd. and make a left. Turn right on Wildcat Canyon Rd., then left on Canon Dr. into the park.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY (UCB)

The attractive campus tucked into the woodsy Berkeley hillside has produced 20 Nobel Prize winners and continues to be one of the finest institutions of higher learning in the United States. Its **Visitor Information Center** (✆ **510/642-5215;** www.berkeley.edu/visitors) is located at 101 University Hall, 220 University Ave., at Oxford Street. Free campus tours are available at 10am Monday through Saturday, departing from the center, and at 1pm on Sundays, departing from Sather Tower. Perhaps the best reason to visit the campus with kids is the Lawrence Hall of Science (see below).

Other notable UCB stops include the **Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology** at Kroeber Hall (✆ **510/642-3682;** http://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu; Wed–Sat 10am–4:30pm, Sun noon–4pm, closed during University holidays; free general admission; docent tours can be reserved at least 2 weeks in advance for $5 per adult and $2 per child under 18); the **Berkeley Art Museum** at 2621 Durant Ave. (✆ **510/642-0808;** www.bampfa.berkeley.edu; Wed–Sun 11am–5pm; admission $8 adults, $5 seniors 65 and up, children 12–17, and non-UC Berkeley students; free children under 12; free first Thurs of the month); and the 307-foot-tall **Sather Tower,** also known as the Campanile, in the center of the campus. The Campanile houses 61 bells ranging in weight from 19 to 10,500 pounds and offers carillon concerts daily at 7:50am, noon, and 6pm, with longer concerts on Sundays at 2pm. Take the elevator to the top for the view (open Mon–Fri 10am–4pm; Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 10am–1:30pm and 3–5pm; admission $2 adults, $1 seniors and children 18 and under; free to UC Berkeley students and staff).

North of the campus at 200 Centennial Dr. is the **UC Berkeley Botanical Garden** (✆ **510/643-2755;** http://botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu), boasting one of the most diverse collections of plants in the country, with more than 12,000 different species and subspecies. Tucked into the hillside, it's a wonderful place for an easy hike. Navigating a stroller up the steep inclines or down bumpy steps on a narrow path can be tricky, but it's worth the effort. (Open daily 9am–5pm; closed first Tues of the month, Thanksgiving, Dec 24, 25, and 31, Jan 1, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; admission $7 adults, $5 seniors and juniors 13–17, $2 children 5–12, free under 5.)

If you're driving to the campus, take I-80 to 580 and exit at University Avenue. Drive east on University for 2 miles until you reach the campus.

Lawrence Hall of Science (LHS) ★★ **Ages 2 and up.** The Lawrence Hall of Science, which honors UC Berkeley's Nobel Prize winner Ernest O. Lawrence, is my favorite place to take our youngest child. Sitting at the upper edges of the hillside campus, the entry plaza offers endless views of the bay and the cities beyond. On a clear day, take in the panoramic scenery as the kids climb all over a 60-foot-long DNA model.

LHS programs are renowned throughout the state for their imaginative interactive exhibits and multifaceted approach to teaching math and science to kids of all ages. Among the permanent exhibits are the **nanoZone,** which teaches kids about the study of very, very small things; **Math Around the World,** where kids can play centuries-old games from Africa, Asia, and Europe that use mathematical concepts; a computer lab; and an insect zoo. At **KidsLab** preschoolers can stack blocks, crawl through a kaleidoscope, work their way through a mirror labyrinth, play at the puppet theater, or chill out in the reading area. After all that, I recommend heading out to the **Outdoor Science Park,** where you can take in more of the sweeping vistas while also learning about soil erosion, earthquakes, and water flow. It's also a nice place for a picnic, as the downstairs cafe is lackluster.

Special weekend workshops are regularly scheduled. Participants must register a week in advance, and workshop fees include museum admission. The museum's Holt Planetarium offers shows, films, and lectures on weekends and holidays and all summer. Planetarium films are an additional $3 for adults and $2.50 for children 18 and under. Most shows are for older kids, but some are geared for the younger set. The gift shop has fascinating books, toys, and kits.

Centennial Dr., Berkeley. ✆ **510/642-5132.** www.lawrencehallofscience.org. Admission $11 adults, $9 students 7–18 and seniors 62 and over, $6 children 3–6, free 2 and under. Daily 10am–5pm. Closed Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Planetarium shows Sat, Sun, and holidays 1, 2:15, and 3:30pm. Closed

Dec 24. **To get there:** By BART: Exit at the Downtown Berkeley Station. Take the University of California local shuttle on the corner of Center St. and Shattuck Ave. to the campus. Once there, transfer to the Hill Service Shuttle at the Hearst Mining Circle (✆ **510/642-4834** for details on fares and times). By car: Take I-80 to 580. Exit at University Ave. Drive east on University 2 miles until you reach the campus. Turn left on Oxford St. Turn right on Hearst St., pass through 2 stoplights to the east side of campus. Make a right on Gayley Rd. Take your 1st left past the Greek Theatre, Stadium Rimway. Make a left at the stop sign, Centennial Dr., and continue 1 mile to the top of the hill.

WHERE TO DINE IN BERKELEY

Not far from the University on Shattuck Avenue is an area known as the Gourmet Ghetto, so named for its principal occupant **Chez Panisse** and the myriad imitators it has spawned. Chez Panisse is the creation of Alice Waters, who in the 1970s revolutionized California, indeed American, cuisine with her emphasis on using seasonal and local ingredients of the highest quality. If you can fit it in, a visit to Chez Panisse is well worth it. The light and airy upstairs cafe is suitable for kids at lunchtime (1517 Shattuck Ave.; ✆ **510/548-5049;** www.chezpanisse.com).

Your best bet with the kids is sure to be **Epicurious Garden** (1509, 1511, and 1513 Shattuck Ave.; www.epicuriousgarden.com), featuring a handful of restaurants serving excellent take-out fare—such as organic soups at Soop, Japanese bento boxes at Kirala2, and burritos at Picoso Taqueria—as well as a lovely, multi-level garden in which to enjoy it. Across the street, the **Cheeseboard Pizza Collective** (1512 Shattuck Ave.; ✆ **510/549-30553;** www.cheeseboardcollective.coop) serves a different type of pizza per day, Tuesday through Saturday. A few blocks off Shattuck Avenue, you'll find **Fat Apple's Restaurant and Bakery** (1346 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way; ✆ **510/526-2260**), which has been serving big, traditional pancake stacks, burgers, and homemade pies for as long as anybody can remember.

In downtown Berkeley, **Caffe Venezia** (1799 University Ave.; ✆ **510/849-4681;** www.caffevenezia.com) serves tasty Italian food in a festive atmosphere made to look like an Italian piazza, and **La Note** is a kid-friendly French bistro with a lovely back garden (2377 Shattuck Ave.; ✆ **510/843-1535;** www.lanoterestaurant.com). For the best pizza in town, head to **Zachary's Chicago Pizza** (1853 Solano Ave.; ✆ **510/525-5950;** www.zacharys.com).

If chocolate is your meal of choice, Berkeley is home to a boutique producer of high-octane cooking and eating chocolate. **Scharffen Berger Chocolate Maker** (also described on p. 244; 914 Heinz Ave., near 7th St.; ✆ **510/981-4050;** www.scharffenberger.com) gives free 1-hour tours of its factory daily. Times vary, so check the website for hours and to sign up. Private tours are also available for a $35 fee; these include a $1 gift certificate for each participant with a limit of 40 guests. Tour guests must be at least 8 years old and wear closed-toe shoes for safety reasons. The factory is off the Ashby Avenue exit on I-80.

2 OAKLAND

Oakland has always been regarded as San Francisco's poor relation. The heavy crime rate and proximity to higher-profile Berkeley and San Francisco have often kept this bayside city from getting its just due. But the city has one of the state's best museums right downtown and an excellent space science center in the hills. Moreover, Bay Area families have been visiting Children's Fairyland and the Paramount Theater for generations. Jack London Square is touristy, but it's a fine starting point for a bike ride and exactly where you want to be for hot Bay Area jazz.

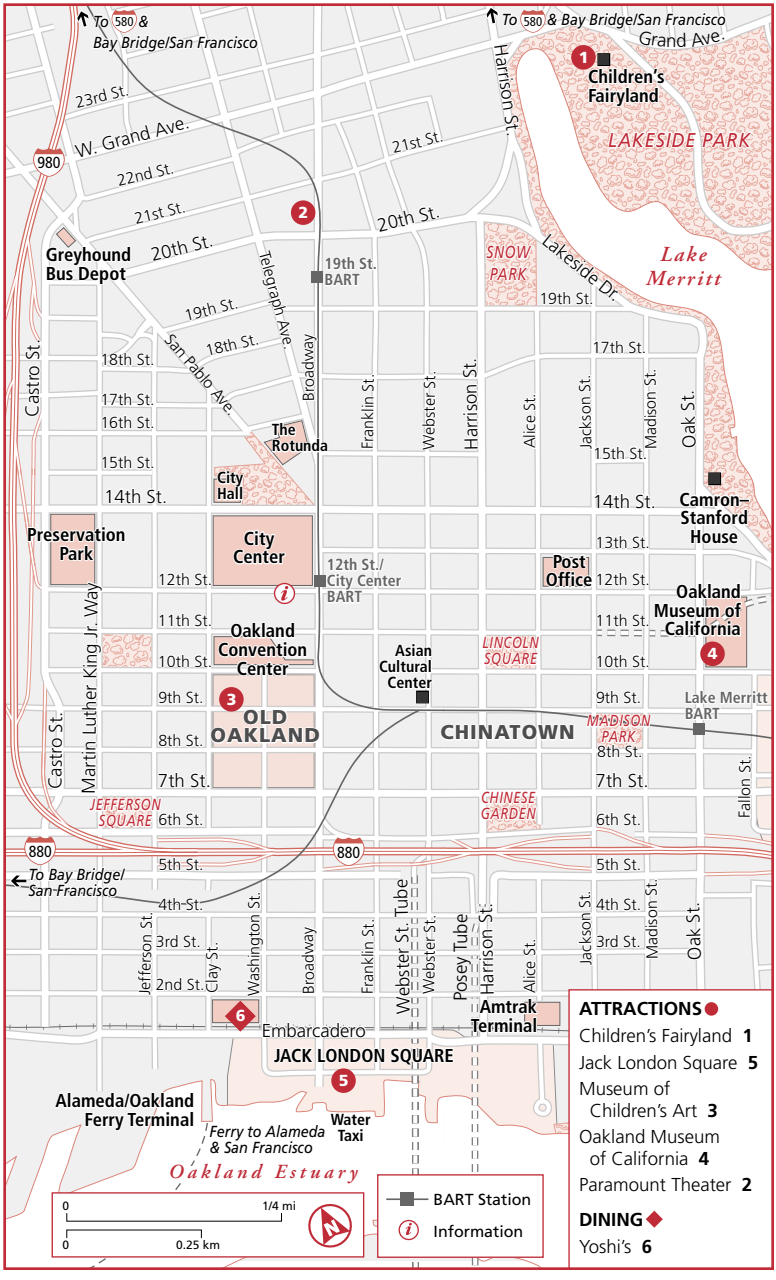
Chabot Space and Science Center **Ages 4 and up.** This 86,000-square-foot facility high in the East Bay hills will thrill youngsters with an interest in space—and is a must-visit for any kid studying the solar system. The center focuses on educating students, teachers, and the general public about astronomy and related sciences and has a number of delightful exhibits to do just that. The **Observatory** houses 3 powerful telescopes, among them one of the largest open to the public in the U.S. (Free access to the refractor telescope is available Fri and Sat evenings 7:30–10:30pm; daytime viewings of the sun, moon, and Venus are available daily 1–4pm to people who have paid general admission.) The **Ask Jeeves Planetarium** offers dazzling shows using the most advanced digital technology to project stunning images across a 70-foot-diameter screen. (Planetarium shows are $5/adults and $4/children, with paid admission.) The **Challenger Learning Center** boasts a full-size space station, and the **Discovery Lab** offers activities for children under age 7. Every Friday night from 7 to 10pm (except holidays and Memorial Day weekend), the **Telescope Maker's Workshop** lets kids of any age make their own telescope. Chabot also has several exciting temporary exhibits. A recent one explored what it's really like to be an astronaut working in space, featuring real spacesuits, astronaut food, and exercise gear. You'll find the drive up here well worth it, as the center is housed on 13 wooded acres full of lovely walking trails with wonderful bay views.

10000 Skyline Blvd., Oakland. ✆ **510/336-7300.** www.chabotspace.org. General admission (required except when visiting evening shows or when exhibits are closed) $13 adults, $10 seniors and students w/ valid ID, $9 children 3–12, free for kids 2 and under. Wed–Thurs 10am–5pm; Fri–Sat 10am–10pm; Sun 11am–5pm. Closed Mon–Tues except certain holidays; check website or call for details. **To get there:** Head east on I-580 to Hwy. 24 (toward Walnut Creek). From 24, go south on Hwy. 13 (Warren Fwy.) toward Hayward. Take the Joaquin Miller/Lincoln Ave. exit. Turn left and proceed up the hill on Joaquin Miller to the crest, then turn left at the signal onto the two lane portion of Skyline Blvd. The center is 1.3 miles up Skyline on the right.

Children's Fairyland **Ages infant to 7.** Fairy tales and nursery rhymes come alive at the delightfully low-tech and innocent Children's Fairyland. Purchase a magic key for $2 when entering, which lets the kids listen to nursery rhymes at each of 30 animated sets. The park has rides for the little ones including Jolly Trolly, a train that rounds the park, and a miniature Ferris wheel. Fairyland also offers daily puppet shows, arts and craft events, and special presentations throughout the year. For families with preschoolers, it is a magical place.

There's a picnic area, or you can pick something up (PB&J, burgers, hot dogs) at the Johnny Appleseed Cafe. Fairyland is located on the shores of **Lake Merritt,** a fine place for boating, lawn bowling, or a scenic stroll. From the **Lake Merritt Boating Center** (✆ **510/238-2196**) you can rent sailboats, rowboats, pedal boats, and canoes for $8 to $15 per hour. The boathouse is open daily, with longest hours in summer. Another option is a Venetian-style gondola ride from **Gondola Servizio** (✆ **866/737-8494;** www.gondolaservizio.com), which operates from daily in summer and Wednesday and Thursday in winter. Rides, $45 per couple for 30 minutes with $10 for each additional passenger, are all private and must be reserved in advance.

Grand Ave. at Bellevue Ave. ✆ **510/452-2259.** www.fairyland.org. Tickets $7 per person, children under 1 free. Adults must be accompanied by a child. Open Fri–Sun and holidays 10am–4pm in winter (Nov to mid-Apr); Wed–Sun and holidays 10am–4pm in spring and fall (mid-Apr to mid-June and Sept–Oct); Mon–Fri 10am–4pm and Sat–Sun 10am–5pm in summer (mid-June to Aug). **To get there:** By BART: Exit at the 19th St. Station. Take the 20th St. stairway and exit at street level. Walk down 20th St., make a left on Harrison St. Turn right on Grand Ave. Fairyland is 1 block over on the right-hand side at the intersection of Grand and Bellevue aves. By car: From the Bay Bridge, take I-580 East to Harrison St. exit. Turn right


To 580 & Bay Bridge/San Francisco
To 580 & Bay Bridge/San Francisco
Grand Ave.
Children's Fairyland
LAKESIDE PARK
Harrison St.
23rd St.
W. Grand Ave.
980
22nd St.
21st St.
21st St.
20th St.
Greyhound Bus Depot
20th St.
Telegraph Ave.
19th St. BART
SNOW PARK
Lakeside Dr.
Lake Merritt
19th St.
19th St.
San Pablo Ave.
18th St.
Broadway
Castro St.
18th St.
17th St.
16th St.
15th St.
14th St.
The Rotunda
City Hall
Franklin St.
Webster St.
Harrison St.
Alice St.
Jackson St.
Madison St.
Oak St.
17th St.
15th St.
14th St.
Camron–Stanford House
Preservation Park
City Center
12th St./ City Center BART
Post Office
13th St.
12th St.
11th St.
Oakland Museum of California
Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Oakland Convention Center
Asian Cultural Center
LINCOLN SQUARE
11th St.
10th St.
9th St.
OLD OAKLAND
CHINATOWN
Lake Merritt BART
MADISON PARK
8th St.
Castro St.
7th St.
JEFFERSON SQUARE
6th St.
CHINESE GARDEN
Fallon St.
880
880
To Bay Bridge/ San Francisco
5th St.
4th St.
Jefferson St.
3rd St.
2nd St.
Clay St.
Washington St.
Broadway
Franklin St.
Webster St. Tube
Webster St.
Posey Tube
Harrison St.
Alice St.
Jackson St.
Madison St.
Oak St.
Amtrak Terminal
Embarcadero
JACK LONDON SQUARE
Alameda/Oakland Ferry Terminal
Ferry to Alameda & San Francisco
Water Taxi
Oakland Estuary
0
1/4 mi
0
0.25 km
BART Station
Information
ATTRACTIONS
Children's Fairyland 1
Jack London Square 5
Museum of Children's Art 3
Oakland Museum of California 4
Paramount Theater 2
DINING
Yoshi's 6

on Harrison and continue for approximately ½ mile. Turn left on Grand Ave. Fairyland is at the corner of Grand and Bellevue aves. There is parking available at the park.

Museum of Childr en's A rt **Ages 18 months and up.** This diminutiv e museum located in downtown Oakland near Chinatown features artwork created by children. Tuesday through Friday the museum offers drop-in classes for kids 18 months and up, covering fun themes like "Food Fantasies" or "Monsters and Magic," while weekend drop-in classes welcome the whole family.

538 9th St., Oakland. ✆ **510/465-8770.** www.mocha.org. Free admission, Drop-in art studio $7 per child. Tues–Fri 10am–5pm; Sat–Sun noon–5pm. **To get there:** By BART: Exit at the 12th St. BART station; exit at the 11th St. gate and walk up Broadway 2 blocks to 9th St. and turn right. Museum is inside S wan's Marketplace at 9th and Washington sts. By car: Cross bridge and get on I-880 S outh toward San Jose. Exit at Broadway/Alameda and turn right at the bott om of the exit ramp ont o 5th St. Turn left on Washington St. and continue 3 blocks; turn left on 8th St. Continue 1 block and turn right onto Clay St., head 1 block and turn left onto 9th St.

Oakland Museum **Ages 5 and up.** The Oakland Museum is unique because of its emphasis on r e-created "environments" rather than separate exhibits. Each floor of the museum pr esents the natur e, ar t, and histor y of California. Life-siz e dioramas r eflect California's vast environment and give children and adults a chance to experience California's natural wildlife on a simulated walk acr oss the state. The aquatic galler y takes visitors along California's coastline and riv ers to see the fr esh water and marine animals living within. The Cowell Hall of California History and the California Art Gallery were being renovated as this w ent to pr ess, so call ahead. The museum's temporar y exhibits have included cultural and ecological topics, and the ar t gallery houses paintings, sculptures, and photographs all created by California artists.

If you get hungr y, you can hav e lunch at the museum r estaurant, which offers sandwiches, salads, and daily specials.

1000 Oak St., Oak land. ✆ **510/238-2200.** w ww.museumca.org. A dmission $8 adults , $5 seniors , children, and students w/valid ID, free for kids under 6, free for everyone the 2nd Sun of each month. Wed–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun noon–5pm; open until 9pm the 1st F ri of each month. Closed Jan 1, F ourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas . **To get ther e:** By BAR T: Exit at the Lake M erritt station. The museum is located 1 block nor th of the station. By car : Take I-880 t o the Jackson St. off-ramp , f ollow sig ns south toward San Jose. Make a left on Oak St. and you'll see it on the right, bt w. 10th and 12th sts.

Oakland Zoo While we're big fans of the S an Francisco Zoo, you'll find a healthy contingent of Bay Area residents who'll tell you the Oakland Zoo tops their list of local menageries. Located in the 525-acr e Knowland Park in the wooded O akland hills, the Oakland Zoo has long focused on housing the animals in envir onments that ar e more like where they would live in the wild. (The SF Zoo has made great strides in that direction, but still has a fe w enclosures that should be updated.) The African S avannah and Rain Forest are impressive exhibits. The extensive Wayne and G ladys Valley Children's Zoo within the zoo offers kids a chance to learn mor e about tortoises, snakes, and other reptiles; to watch alligators swim fr om under water vie wing por tals; to pet goats and sheep; to check out lemurs, bunnies, and ev en fruit bats (in a 50-ft.-tall enclosur e); and to inspect the cr eepy, crawly B ug H ouse, among other activities. I n addition to a z oo train that takes passengers on a scenic ride thr ough the hills, offering lo vely bay vie ws, the Oakland Zoo houses a rides area with plenty of kids' rides similar to those you'd find at an old-time fair or boar dwalk. The rides are a great way to wind up a day at the z oo. So far the z oo's food options ar e limited, but hopefully that will change as the z oo continues to expand and improve.

9777 Golf Links Rd., Oakland. ✆ **510/632-9525.** www.oaklandzoo.org. Admission $11 adults 15–54, $7 seniors 55+ and children 2–14, free children under 2. Car parking is $6. Daily 10am–4pm. (Children's area and rides open at 11am.) Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas. **To get there:** By BART: Exit at the Coliseum/Oakland Airport; take the AC Transit Bus #56 (90th Ave./Seminary) to Mountain Blvd. and Golf Links Rd. By car: Take I-80 East, merge onto I-580 E toward CA-24/Downtown Oakland/Hayward-Stockton. Exit at Golf Links Rd/98th Ave.; turn left onto Golf Links Rd.

Paramount Theatre A trip to this theater, built in 1931, will take you back to the age of Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn. Built in Art Deco style, the restored theater is used for concerts, plays, old Hollywood films, and often the Oakland symphony. It still has an original Wurlitzer organ that is played before all films and some other events. Tours are offered at 10am on the first and third Saturdays of the month, excluding holiday weekends. Tour tickets are $5 each; children must be at least 10 years old and accompanied by an adult. Call or check the website for specific dates and prices of other events.

2025 Broadway (at 21st St.). ✆ **510/465-6400** (24-hr. recorded hot line), or 510/893-2300 (office). www.paramounttheatre.com. Tickets available at the box office (open Tues–Fri 11am–5:30pm, Sat 11am–3pm) or through Ticketmaster. **To get there:** By BART: Exit at the 19th St. station. The theater is about ½ block north of the station. By car: Take I-880 to the Broadway exit. Turn left on Broadway. The theater will be on the left, around 20th St.

JACK LONDON SQUARE

Built as a rival port to San Francisco, Jack London Square has an enviable location on the waterfront, steps from the pier where the Alameda/Oakland Ferry lands. Filled with lots of chain restaurants, souvenir shops, and a multiplex cinema, the square could be put to better use, but it is a convenient place from which to explore the immediate surroundings and get a great view of the Bay Bridge on a clear day.

You could drive, but a more fun way to get to Jack London Square is by a 40-minute ferry ride. Board the **Alameda/Oakland ferry** at Pier 39 or the Ferry Building. Round-trip fares are $13 for adults and $7 for kids 5 to 12. For a schedule, contact Blue & Gold Fleet (✆ **415/773-1188;** www.blueandgoldfleet.com).

By car, take I-880 from the Bay Bridge. Exit at the Broadway/Alameda off ramp. Make a right on Adelaide Street, a left on 3rd Street, and continue 12 blocks to Broadway and turn right. Lot parking is available.

By BART, exit at 12th Street/Downtown Oakland. Take a bus from the station or try the free downtown shuttle that runs weekdays between 11am and 2pm between Broadway and Jack London Square.

WHAT TO SEE At the **USS *Potomac's* Floating Museum** (✆ **510/627-1215;** www.usspotomac.org), Franklin Delano Roosevelt's restored presidential yacht is open year-round for dockside tours. Tours run on Wednesday and Friday between 10:30am and 2:30pm, Sunday noon to 3pm. Reservations are required for groups of 10 or more, and appreciated even for smaller groups. Tour admission is $10 for ages 13 to 59, $8 seniors 60 and over, free for kids 12 and under. Two-hour history cruises around the bay are offered on alternating weeks Thursday and Saturday at 11am, from May to mid-November. Tickets are $45 adults, $40 seniors 60 and over, $25 children 6 to 12, free for kids under 6. A 15-minute video accompanies the tour. Advanced ticket purchase is recommended and can be done by calling the number listed above or online at www.ticketweb.com). In addition, several tours to Angel Island and other interesting places on the bay are scheduled each year between May and November (these tend to run $65/adult, $60/senior, and $40/kids under 12).

Active families should check out the **Embarcadero Bay Bicycle Trail.** The 3-mile trail along the waterfront from Jack London Square to Alameda's Park Street Bridge is part of what will eventually be a 500-mile long San Francisco Bay trail that, when completed, will connect all nine Bay Area counties, 47 cities, and major bridges crossing the bay.

WHERE TO DINE You'll find several family-friendly restaurants at Jack London Square, such as Cocina Poblana (Mexican), Kincaid's Bayhouse, Il Pescatore (Italian), and Hahn's Hibachi (Korean BBQ), as well as chains like Subway and Tony Roma's. The best place to dine at Jack London Square is **Yoshi's** (510 Embarcadero West; ✆ **510/238-9200;** www.yoshis.com), a Japanese restaurant and jazz club. Yoshi's Sunday matinee jazz concerts are tailor-made to introduce young audiences to jazz, and matinee brunches offer special-priced options for families. Kids under 15 are $5 and doors open at 1pm for the 2pm concerts.

A short walk from Jack London Square takes you to Broadway, Oakland's Chinatown, renowned for some of the best dim sum in the Bay Area. A couple of blocks off Broadway, at 1007 Clay St., you'll find **Le Cheval,** serving terrific Vietnamese food at large round tables in a very family-friendly atmosphere (✆ **510/763-8957;** www.lecheval.com). Off Broadway between 40th Street and MacArthur Boulevard lies **Bay Wolf** (3853 Piedmont Blvd.; ✆ **510/655-6004;** www.baywolf.com), one of Oakland's most enduringly popular restaurants, offering flavorful California fare made with top-quality, seasonal ingredients. The dining room may be too small for some families, but the front deck has heat lamps and a radiant heat floor, allowing for year-round alfresco dining. Near the shores of Lake Merritt, **Zza's Trattoria** offers great pizza and other Italian fare (552 Grand Ave.; ✆ **510/839-9124**).

3 POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE

Once you traverse the Golden Gate Bridge, a pleasant 1-hour drive through Marin County and Samuel P. Taylor State Park leads you to Point Reyes National Seashore, a mix of wild coastline and forest of unequivocal appeal to hikers, nature lovers, and wildlife-watchers of all ages. The rocky shore along this part of the coast is a direct result of earthquake activity. The San Andreas Fault separates Point Reyes, the northernmost landmass on the Pacific Plate, from the rest of California, which rests on the North American Plate. Point Reyes is moving toward Alaska at the rate of 2 inches a year. During the 1906 earthquake, it jumped north 20 feet in an instant.

Point Reyes Station, the minuscule town nearby, is a tourist magnet on the weekends, so it supports a handful of good restaurants and craft shops within its 4-block radius. You can easily drive to Point Reyes, spend the day, and get back to San Francisco by dinner, but if you'd like to spend a night or two, the area is well served by B&Bs. For information on what's available, contact **Point Reyes Lodging** (✆ **800/539-1872** or 415/663-1872; www.ptreyes.com).

To reach Point Reyes, cross the Golden Gate Bridge and exit on San Anselmo/Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Turn left, heading west on Sir Francis Drake and stay on this road as it passes through the pricey suburbs of San Anselmo, Ross, Woodacre, and Lagunitas. The drive to park headquarters takes an hour in light traffic.

WHAT TO SEE At the junction of Highway 1 and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard in Olema, follow the signs to the **Bear Valley Visitor Center** (✆ **415/464-5100**) about a minute away. The center has maps, informative park rangers, a book/gift section, and

Petaluma
Tomales
Novato
Olema
San Pablo Bay
Sir Francis Drake Blvd.
San Rafael
POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE
PACIFIC OCEAN
Oakland
San Francisco
0 10 mi
Tomales Point
Dillon Beach
Tomales Point Trail
TULE ELK RESERVE
McClures Beach
Pierce Point Ranch
Kehoe Beach
Marshall Beach
Pierce Point Rd.
Abbotts Lagoon
Tomales Beach
North Beach
L Ranch Rd.
Tomales Bay
South Beach
Bull Pt. Trail
TOMALES BAY STATE PARK
Oyster Farm
Point Reyes Lighthouse Visitor Center
Kenneth C. Patrick Visitor Center
Sea Lion Overlook
POINT REYES
Drakes Estero
Inverness
Drakes Beach
Chimney Rock
Point Reyes Lifeboat Station
Limantour Rd.
Inverness Park
RIFT ZONE
Point Reyes Station
Nicasio Reservoir
Limantour Beach
Sky
Drakes Bay
Bear Valley Visitor Center
Olema
PACIFIC OCEAN
Point Reyes Wilderness Area
Arch Rock
Glen
SAMUEL P. TAYLOR STATE PARK
Wildcat Beach
Five Brooks
GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
Point Reyes Bird Observatory
Audubon Canyon Ranch
Bolinas Point
Bolinas
Bolinas Lagoon
Duxbury Point
Camping
Picnic area
Ranger Station
Trail
0 5 mi
0 5 km

some interesting exhibits on the ecology of the area. Many trails begin here, including a less-than-1-mile earthquake trail along the San Andreas Fault. Another park attraction is **Kule Loklo,** a Coast Miwok Native Indian village replica. If you're visiting during the school year, you may run into groups of kids.

Hiking is the prime activity in the park. **Abbott's Lagoon** is a flat, short hike that is perfect for children, ending at the edge of the lagoon—offering plenty of bird-watching and sightings of local flora along the way. A drive to **Limantour Beach** is also a terrific option. You get to the beach by turning left on Bear Valley Road and left again on Limantour Road. Although swimming is not recommended (and it's usually too cold), you can bird-watch and picnic here.

Point Reyes Lighthouse is a big attraction in these parts all year long, but especially from January through March when migrating gray whales pass by. From the Bear Valley Visitor Center, the lighthouse is a 21-mile drive along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard through dairy farms and pastures, where you can see many a cow lounging around. At the end of the road is a parking lot. The lighthouse is a half-mile walk away, and down 300 steep steps—with the ocean far below. It is a dramatic walk that will enthrall your kids; just be sure to keep a firm grip on them. The cliffs all around this area are not stable enough to climb on, and you'll see lots of warnings to that effect. **Sea Lion Overlook** near the lighthouse is the place to watch those creatures as well as harbor seals.

From this stop, it's a short drive to **Drake's Beach** (just follow the signs as you drive to or from the lighthouse). Another fine visitor center with friendly park rangers is on the beach parking lot, next to a cafe specializing in deep-fried foods. As is the case at all the area beaches, there is no lifeguard on duty and the undertow can be dangerous, so swimming is absolutely discouraged. At the end of Drake's Beach, past the Point Reyes Lifeboat Station, is **Chimney Rock.** The **Elephant Seal Overlook** nearby is a good vantage point for observing elephant seals in the winter months.

At the northernmost tip of the seashore at **Tomales Point** is the **Tule Elk Reserve,** where more than 500 of these once nearly extinct creatures live on 2,600 protected acres. The reserve is a 30-minute drive from Inverness. Stay on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard until you reach Pierce Point Road, which takes you directly into the reserve.

WHERE TO DINE If you're hungry or want to gather a picnic, continue on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard until it meets Point Reyes–Petaluma Road. Drive across the little bridge and you'll be in Point Reyes Station. **The Station House,** 11180 State Rte. 1 (✆ **415/663-1515;** www.stationhousecafe.com; closed Wed), serves terrific breakfasts and lunch and dinner specials that draw on local and organic ingredients, such as locally raised pork chops or fish and chips. It's moderately priced, immensely popular, and hosts live music on Thursdays and Sundays. For takeout, **Cow Girl Creamery,** 80 4th St. (✆ **415/663-9335;** www.cowgirlcreamery.com), open Wednesday through Sunday from 10am to

Tips Taking a Dip

If you're making this trip in August, in warmer weather, some wonderful swimming beaches lie along Tomales Bay in Inverness. Look for signs on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard leading to **Chicken Ranch Beach** or **Shell Beach.** Other times of the year, dress warmly. Point Reyes gets foggy and cold.

6pm, is well worth checking out for its award-winning cheeses. It's located next to a small grocer where you can pick up other goodies for a lovely picnic.

4 CALISTOGA & NAPA VALLEY

Napa Valley is the country's most celebrated wine-growing region. Less than 30 miles from end to end, this fertile area is covered in vineyards and accessorized with world-class wine-tasting rooms, excellent restaurants, and marvelous resorts and inns. It's paradise for couples with time to relax. For families, it's welcoming but will require some flexibility. Many of the valley's copious bed and breakfasts are not open to children; room occupancy may be limited to two people, no interconnecting rooms may be available, or children may be expressly discouraged. Likewise, a number of restaurants may not be appropriate for young children.

That said, we have found ways to enjoy Napa with the kids. Romantic B&Bs aside, several family-friendly motels grace the area, and many have swimming pools. My suggestion is to head straight to Calistoga, at the northern edge of the Napa Valley. Well-preserved and historical, Calistoga offers the best of the Napa Valley in terms of relaxation. The restaurants are more casual than down valley, and with the great wine to be had with your meal, it's fortunate that most hotels are within walking distance.

The fastest route to Napa Valley is to cross the Bay Bridge (I-80) and continue east on I-80 until you see the Napa/Highway 29 exit near Vallejo. Highway 29 is the main road through the Napa Valley. Follow it past Yountville, Oakville, St. Helena, and drive another 8 miles until you reach Calistoga. An arrow on the right directs you into town. Once there, you won't need to face infamously crowded Highway 29 until it's time to head back to San Francisco.

WHAT TO SEE If you gather the strength to drag the kids away from the pool, horseback riding past the redwoods in **Bothe–Napa Valley State Park** includes some history of the area delivered by the knowledgeable guide. **Old Faithful Geyser,** one of only three such geysers in the world, works full-time blowing off steam. The 350°F (177°C) water spews out to a height of about 60 feet every 30 to 40 minutes depending on barometric pressure, the moon, tides, and tectonic stresses. (The Exploratorium, on p. 160, in San Francisco, has an exhibit on geysers if you want to learn more.) The performance lasts about a minute, but you can stay as long as you like, picnicking and waiting for the next explosion. It's located just north of Calistoga off Highway 29 at 1299 Tubbs Lane. It's open daily from 9am to 6pm in summer and 9am to 5pm in winter; call ✆ **707/942-6463** for more information. Admission is $8 adults, $7 seniors 60 and up, $3 children 6 to 12, and free for children under 6. (AAA cards give you a $1 discount.)

Biking around the valley is another option. Rentals are available at **Calistoga Bikeshop** (1318 Lincoln Ave., Calistoga; ✆ **707/942-9687;** www.calistogabikeshop.com), or you can reserve a guided bicycle winery tour with lunch or kayaking tour through **Getaway Adventures** (✆ **800/499-2453** or 707/568-3040; www.getawayadventures.com; office closed weekends). Soaring above the valley in a hot-air balloon is a coveted early-morning adventure apparently, given the number of tour operators in Napa alone. **Balloons Above the Valley** (✆ **800/464-6824** or 707/253-2222; www.balloonrides.com) provides pickup and drop-off within Napa Valley, a preflight snack, and post-flight brunch. The cost is $210 per person and $145 per child 12 and under, with an additional 11.5% service fee—although you can often find discounts on their website. **Bonaventura**

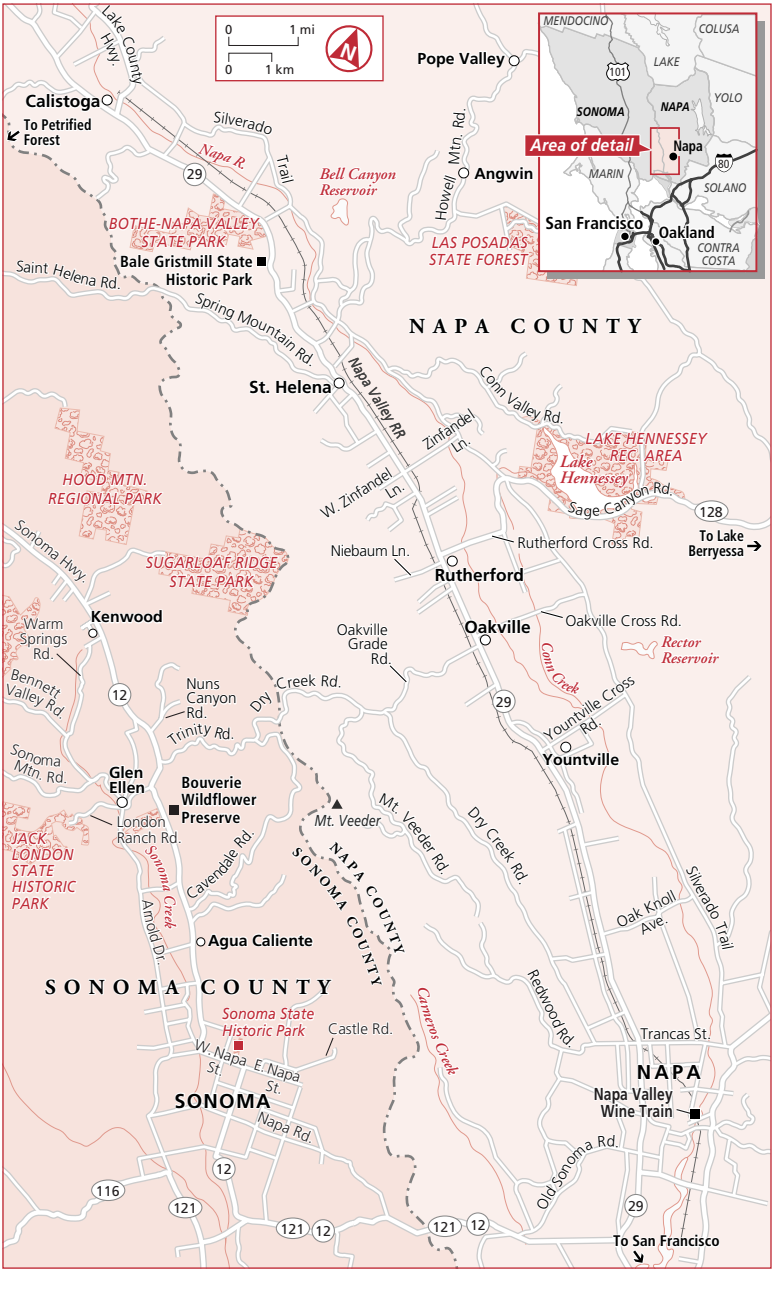
Balloon Company (✆ **800/FLY-NAPA** (359-6272) or 707/944-2822; www.bonaventuraballoons.com) offers a balloon excursion and complimentary champagne celebration for $2,350 per person and $145 to $175 for kids 12 and under; packages and discounts are often available.

If you do want to visit a winery, I recommend two in Calistoga when traveling with kids. **Clos Pegase** (1060 Dunaweal Lane; ✆ **707/942-4981;** www.clospegase.com), located close to Old Faithful Geyser, has a delightful picnic facility under an old oak tree. You can bring your own lunch or purchase one from the visitor center, which is open daily from 10:30am to 5pm, except some holidays. After running around outside, the kids will probably be amenable to one of the free guided tours, offered daily at 11:30am or 2pm. Clos Pegase also offers tastings (for a fee) if you can get the kids to hang around while you contemplate the bouquet of your merlot. At **Sterling Vineyards** (1111 Dunaweal Lane; ✆ **800/726-6136** or 707/942-3345; www.sterlingvineyards.com) the children will appreciate the aerial tram that takes you from the parking lot to the dramatic hilltop winery. You'll have to pay for the ride, though. Fees to visit Sterling, open daily from 10am to 4:30pm, are $20 for adults and $10 for any one under 21 (under 3 free). Once there, however, you can take a free self-guided tour and enjoy a complimentary tasting of five wines.

WHERE TO STAY Calistoga has lots of hotels and motels with swimming pools and spa facilities, both of which are very important to make this retreat work for the entire family. If you plan far in advance, the ideal resort is **Indian Springs** (1712 Lincoln Ave., Calistoga; ✆ **707/942-4913;** www.indianspringscalistoga.com) The 24-unit property, consisting of charming wooden bungalows with furnished kitchens, was entirely renovated in 2006. Picnic tables and barbecues are placed on the lawn outside for guest use along with surreys (bikes with bench seats and awnings) and Ping-Pong tables. A fine 1913 bathhouse is now a spa with a full range of services including mud baths, facials, and massage. The topper is an Olympic-size heated mineral pool surrounded by lounge chairs and a mountain view that will mesmerize you. Pick up something to barbecue, a little fruit, and some drinks, and there will be no reason to leave the premises. Lodge rates are $185 to $225 for a double on weekdays and $235 to $290 on weekends, with the highest prices in summer. Cottage prices range from $195 to $825, depending on size (the largest one sleeps 6) and season.

If Indian Springs is completely booked (phone 48 hr. before you'd like to come to get in on cancellations), check availability at the **Best Western Stevenson Manor Inn** (1830 Lincoln Ave., Calistoga; ✆ **707/942-1112;** $120–$269 double). It doesn't have the charm or amenities of Indian Springs, but the spacious motel rooms are nicely equipped, with fridges, coffeemakers, fireplaces, or whirlpool tubs available, and there's an enclosed pool with a hot tub, sauna, and steam room.

WHERE TO DINE One benefit of staying in Calistoga is that the 4-block town and its restaurants and shops are walking distance from the lodgings. There are a lot of restaurants for a town this size, most somewhat expensive given that they cater to tourists. **All Season's Bistro** in the Mount View Hotel (1400 Lincoln Ave., Calistoga; ✆ **707/942-9111**) serves dinner Tuesday to Sunday (and lunch Fri–Sun), combining old-fashioned down-home dining charm with sophisticated, seasonally inspired dishes. There's no kids' menu, but the kitchen is always happy to whip up some buttered pasta for the little ones. The **Calistoga Inn Restaurant & Brewery** (1250 Lincoln Ave., Calistoga; ✆ **707/942-4101**) has appealing, seasonal offerings like a roasted pork quesadillas or braised lamb shank with buttermilk mashed potatoes, served indoors or on the patio.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Bell Canyon Reservoir
Pope Valley
Howell Mtn. Rd.
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Area of detail
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COLUSA
LAKE
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YOLO
SONOMA
NAPA
Napa
MARIN
80
SOLANO
San Francisco
Oakland
CONTRA COSTA
BOTHE-NAPA VALLEY STATE PARK
Bale Gristmill State Historic Park
Saint Helena Rd.
LAS POSADAS STATE FOREST
Spring Mountain Rd.
NAPA COUNTY
St. Helena
Napa Valley RR
Zinfandel Ln.
Conn Valley Rd.
LAKE HENNESSEY REC. AREA
Lake Hennessey
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To Lake Berryessa
HOOD MTN. REGIONAL PARK
Sonoma Hwy.
SUGARLOAF RIDGE STATE PARK
Niebaum Ln.
Rutherford Cross Rd.
Rutherford
Kenwood
Warm Springs Rd.
Oakville
Oakville Cross Rd.
Oakville Grade Rd.
Conn Creek
Rector Reservoir
Bennett Valley Rd.
12
Nuns Canyon Rd.
Dry Creek Rd.
Trinity Rd.
29
Yountville Cross Rd.
Yountville
Sonoma Mtn. Rd.
Glen Ellen
Bouverie Wildflower Preserve
London Ranch Rd.
Mt. Veeder
Mt. Veeder Rd.
Dry Creek Rd.
JACK LONDON STATE HISTORIC PARK
Sonoma Creek
Cavedale Rd.
NAPA COUNTY
SONOMA COUNTY
Oak Knoll Ave.
Silverado Trail
Arnold Dr.
Agua Caliente
SONOMA COUNTY
Carneros Creek
Redwood Rd.
Sonoma State Historic Park
Castle Rd.
Trancas St.
W. Napa St.
E. Napa St.
NAPA
Napa Valley Wine Train
SONOMA
Napa Rd.
Old Sonoma Rd.
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To San Francisco

Just south of Calistoga, in the town of St. Helena, you'll find **Taylor's Refresher** (933 Main St., St. Helena; ✆ **707/963-3486;** www.taylorsrefresher.com). Open since 1949, this delightful diner is the older sibling of the terrific one in San Francisco (p. 125). Also in St. Helena is a veritable Napa institution **Tra Vigne** (1050 Charter Oak Ave., St. Helena; ✆ **707/963-4444;** www.travignerestaurant.com). The restaurant itself is always packed and may not be the best choice with kids. Instead, pick up sandwiches or salads at its adjacent Cantinetta delicatessen and eat in the lovely courtyard.

5 AMUSEMENT PARKS

Paramount's Great America **Ages 5 and up.** Since opening in 1978, this tawdry amusement park has undergone several incarnations and is currently owned by Paramount Studios, so many attractions feature a Nickelodeon theme. Dora, Diego, and SpongeBob SquarePants can be seen walking about. Kidzville, the park area for younger children, offers pint-sized roller coasters, bumper cars, and other attractions for the smaller set. Big-kid daredevils will be happy to know that Great America has the most coasters in Northern California, including FireFall, which spins riders through "fire and water effects" as they drop 60 feet, and SURVIVOR The Ride, based on the reality TV series. Other rides that take you free-falling, upside down, through loops, backward and forward at speeds up to 50 mph, or twisting and weaving, have names like Delirium, Psycho Mouse, Invertigo, Vortex, and Drop Tower Stream Zone. Whew! If that's too much, stick to Rip Roaring Rapids white-water rafting, the Columbia Carousel, and The Grizzly, a replica of an old-style wooden roller coaster. Boomerang Bay Beach Club is an 11-acre water park, complete with 13 water slides.

4701 Great America Pkwy., Santa Clara. ✆ **408/988-1776.** www.pgathrills.com. Admission $54 ages 7–59; $36 seniors 60 and up and children 2 and under free; $30 after 4pm, at the front entrance only. Weekends Apr–May, daily w/a few exceptions June–Aug, weekends Sep–Oct; open from 10am (closing times vary). Parking $10. **To get there:** Take 101 south to the Great America Pkwy. exit.

Safari West Wildlife Preserve **Ages 4 and up.** Get a little bit of Africa in the wine country. You and the kids will pile into real safari jeeps, amble across 400 acres of Savannah-like environment, and gaze upon giraffe, gazelle, ostrich, several species of African antelope, and even a scimitar-horned oryx (sounds exotic, doesn't it?). You'll also see zebras, lemurs, cheetahs, several species of exotic birds—more than 400 mammals and birds in all at this wildlife preserve dedicated to the conservation of endangered animals. You can visit for the afternoon, but for the full African safari experience, your family can opt to overnight in a "safari tent" or cottage. On-site dining options include the Savannah Cafe, offering somewhat pricey safari ranch-style barbecue meals, or the moderately priced Delilah's, which is only open in summer. Comfortable pants or jeans (shorts in summer), walking shoes, hats, and sunscreen are recommended.

3115 Porter Creek Rd., Santa Rosa. ✆ **800/616-2695** or 707/579-2551. www.safariwest.com. Safari tour prices $68 adults, $30 children 3–12, $10 children under 3. Safari tour times daily 9am, 1pm, and 4pm (Apr–late Oct), 10am and 2pm (late Oct–Mar). Lodging tents $260–$295 double-room and $25 each additional person requiring a futon; no charge to infants 2 and under not requiring a futon. Cottage $350 for 4 people; $25 for each additional guest. **To get there:** Take 101 North to River Rd./Calistoga/Mark West Spring Rd. exit. Turn right off ramp and head east on Mark West Springs Rd. for 7 miles. Turn left into park entrance at Franz Valley Rd.

Six Flags Discovery Kingdom **Ages 4 and up.** Discovery Kingdom is America's only amusement park to combine thrills with a wildlife and marine park. A day at this 135-acre park can have some family members free-falling at 70 mph on the 150-foot-tall V-2 Vertical Velocity or spinning floorless on Medusa, billed as the longest, tallest, most state-of-the-art roller coaster in the region. Calmer rides more suitable for families that like to keep their stomachs in one place include a submarine, a balloon Ferris wheel, and bumper cars. Giraffes, cougars, leopards, elephants, Bengal and Siberian tigers, and rare birds and reptiles have now joined the famous dolphins and sea lions.

Fairgrounds Dr. (off I-80), Vallejo. ✆ **707/643-6722** (recording) or 707/644-4000 (voice). www.sixflags.com/parks/discoverykingdom. Season passes $50; day ticket adults $45, kids under 48 in. $25, free children 2 and under. Check website for discounts (pre-purchased tickets can be as low as $25). Open daily 10am June–Aug, weekends and holidays Mar 15–May and Sept–Oct (closing times vary). **To get there:** The Blue & Gold Fleet provides ferry service from Pier 41 to the Vallejo dock; from there it's a 15-min. bus ride to the park. The ferry ticket price is $13 adults, $6.50 children 6–11 and seniors; a ferry day pass is $24. You can buy tickets online at www.blueandgoldfleet.com. By car: Take I-80 to the Hwy. 37 exit and exit at Fairgrounds Dr. Alternatively, you can drive over the Golden Gate Bridge on 101 North, to Hwy. 37 east to Fairgrounds Dr.

6 ANOTHER FAMILY OUTING BY THE BAY

Coyote Point Museum (CPM) **All ages.** Coyote Point Museum is an educational facility located at Coyote Point Park in San Mateo. The goal of the museum is nature education; thus, kids are invited to observe daily otter and fox feedings, take a "nature" walk through a model of the Bay Area's different ecosystems, visit a variety of rescued animals, and bird-watch at the aviary. CPM assembles exhibits on different aspects of California's environment, most of which are hands-on, and children are encouraged to use the computers and interactive activities. Weekends feature animal talks (at 2pm), which are included with admission, and special events that may incur an additional fee.

Along with the museum, families can enjoy the walking trails, beaches, playgrounds, and marina at Coyote Point Park. Picnic facilities are available in the park and on the beaches are boat rentals. The park is open every day including holidays from 8am (closing time varies from 5–8pm depending on the season).

1651 Coyote Point Dr., San Mateo. ✆ **650/342-7755;** Coyote Point Recreation Area 650/573-2592. www.coyoteptmuseum.org. Admission $7 adults, $5 seniors and children 13–17, $3 children 4–12, free children 3 and under. $5 car park entrance fee. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun noon–5pm; closed Mon except holidays; closed Thanksgiving, Dec 24, Christmas, and New Year's Day. **To get there:** Take 101 south to the Poplar Ave. exit. Turn right on Humboldt St. to Peninsula Ave. Turn right on Peninsula. Drive over the freeway, then circle into the park. Parking is limited, so arrive early.

Appendix: Fast Facts, Toll-Free Numbers & Websites

1 FAST FACTS: SAN FRANCISCO

AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION (AAA) The office at 100 Van Ness Ave. provides maps and other information for members. Call ✆ **800/AAA-HELP** (800/222-4357) for emergency roadside service or ✆ **415/565-2012** for general information. You'll also find an AAA office on 160 Sutter St. at Kearny Street. (✆ **415/433-2722;** www.csaa.com).

AMERICAN EXPRESS For traveler's checks, travel information, and member services visit the office at 455 Market St., at 1st Street (✆ **415/536-2600**). Open Monday through Friday from 9am to 5:30pm, Saturday from 10am to 2pm.

AREA CODES Local area codes are 415 for San Francisco, 650 for San Mateo County, and 510 for Oakland and Berkeley.

ATM NETWORKS You'll practically trip over ATMs in the Financial District and on Market Street. Try to avoid using them after dark.

BABYSITTERS Most hotel concierge will simply provide referrals to a babysitting service, which guests must then call on their own. Three recommended local companies supply short-term sitters: **American ChildCare Service** (✆ **415/285-2300;** www.americanchildcare.com), **Aunt Ann's In-House Staffing** (✆ **415/749-3650;** www.in-housestaffing.com), and **Town & Country Resources** (✆ **800/398-8810** or 415/567-0956; www.tandcr.com). All advertise that their nannies are thoroughly screened and trained, and all have 4-hour minimums. Hourly fees range from $14 to $25, and an additional agency fee may apply. For $100 per child, you can give them a memorable night out through the **Explorer's Club** (✆ **415/902-7014;** www.eckidsclub.com), a tour company catering to kids (see p. 188 for a full review).

BUSINESS HOURS Most retail stores open at 10am and close at 6pm or 7pm. Many have extended hours on Thursday and Friday nights. Stores in the Westfield Center open at 9:30am weekdays and, like other large downtown retailers, are also open on Sundays from noon until 5pm.

CURRENCY The most common bills are the $1 (a "buck"), $5, $10, and $20 denominations. There are also $2 bills (seldom encountered), $50 bills, and $100 bills (the last 2 are usually not welcome as payment for small purchases).

Coins come in seven denominations: 1¢ (1 cent, or a penny); 5¢ (5 cents, or a nickel); 10¢ (10 cents, or a dime); 25¢ (25 cents, or a quarter); 50¢ (50 cents, or a half dollar); the gold-colored Sacagawea coin, worth $1; and the rare silver dollar.

For additional information see "Money," p. 33.

DENTISTS Call the **San Francisco Dental Society** for 24-hour referrals (✆ **415/421-1435;** www.sfds.org). The

San Francisco Dental Office, 131 Steuart St. (✆ **415/777-5115;** www.thesmilepro.com), offers emergency service and comprehensive dental care Monday and Tuesday from 8am to 4:30pm, Wednesday and Thursday from 10:30am to 6:30pm, and Friday from 8am to 2:30pm.

DOCTORS **St. Francis Memorial Hospital,** 900 Hyde St., between Bush and Pine streets (✆ **415/353-6000**), offers 24-hour emergency care. Another emergency room can be found at California Pacific Medical Center at 2333 Buchanan St. at Sacramento Street (✆ 415/600-6000). **San Francisco On Call Medical Group** (✆ **415/732-7029;** www.sfoncall.com) offers 24-hour care; same-day appointments at its office at 490 Post St., Ste. 710, at Mason St.; and visits to sick patients at home and in hotels. Your hotel can also contact on-call doctors who make house calls.

DRINKING LAWS No one under 21 can drink or purchase alcohol legally in California. All clubs, bars, supermarkets, and liquor stores check the identification of anyone who appears younger than 30. Alcohol is sold 7 days a week at supermarkets, corner stores, and wine shops between the hours of 6am and 2am. Bars do not serve liquor past 2am.

EARTHQUAKES California gets them, but you most likely won't experience the real thing firsthand. Just in case, you should know a few basic precautionary measures. When you're inside a building, seek cover; do not run outside. Stand under a doorway or against a wall, or get under a sturdy table, and stay away from windows. When you exit a building after a substantial quake, use stairwells, not elevators. If you are in a car, pull over to the shoulder and stop—but not until you are away from bridges, overpasses, telephone poles, and power lines. Stay in your car. If you are outside walking, stay away from trees, power lines, and the sides of buildings. If you are in an area with tall buildings, find a doorway in which to stand. Above all, do not panic and frighten your children. Earthquakes end quickly.

ELECTRICITY Like Canada, the United States uses 110 to 120 volts AC (60 cycles), compared to 220 to 240 volts AC (50 cycles) in most of Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Downward converters that change 220–240 volts to 110–120 volts are difficult to find in the United States, so bring one with you.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES All embassies are located in the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. Some consulates are located in major U.S. cities, and most nations have a mission to the United Nations in New York City. If your country isn't listed below, call for directory information in Washington, D.C. (✆ **202/555-1212**) or log on to **www.embassy.org/embassies**.

The embassy of **Australia** is at 1601 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036 (✆ **202/797-3000;** www.austemb.org). There are consulates in Atlanta, Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. In San Francisco, the consulate is at 575 Market St., Ste. 1800 (✆ **415/536-1970**).

The embassy of **Canada** is at 501 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001 (✆ **202/682-1740;** www.canadianembassy.org). There are 13 Canadian consulates in the U.S., including locations in Los Angeles, New York, and Seattle. In San Francisco, the consulate is at 580 California St., 14th floor (✆ **415/834-3180**).

The embassy of **Ireland** is at 2234 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (✆ **202/462-3939;** www.irelandemb.org). Irish consulates are in Boston, Chicago, New York, and San Francisco. In San Francisco, the consulate is at 100 Pine St., Ste. 3350 (✆ **415/392-4214**).

The embassy of **New Zealand** is at 37 Observatory Circle NW, Washington, DC

20008 (✆ **202/328-4800;** www.nzembassy.com). New Zealand consulates are in Los Angeles and New York.

The embassy of the **United Kingdom** is at 3100 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (✆ **202/588-6500;** www.britainusa.com). Other British consulates are in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle. In San Francisco, the consulate is at 1 Sansome St., Ste. 850 (✆ **415/617-1300**).

EMERGENCIES Dial **911** for police, fire, or medical emergencies.

HOLIDAYS Banks, government offices, post offices, and many stores, restaurants, and museums are closed on the following legal national holidays: January 1 (New Year's Day), the third Monday in January (Martin Luther King, Jr., Day), the third Monday in February (Presidents' Day), the last Monday in May (Memorial Day), July 4 (Independence Day), the first Monday in September (Labor Day), the second Monday in October (Columbus Day), November 11 (Veterans' Day/Armistice Day), the fourth Thursday in November (Thanksgiving Day), and December 25 (Christmas). The Tuesday after the first Monday in November is Election Day, a federal government holiday in presidential-election years (held every 4 years, and next in 2012).

HOSPITALS **San Francisco General Hospital,** 1001 Potrero Ave. (✆ **415/206-8000**), accepts uninsured emergency patients, but the wait can be brutally long and uncomfortable. If you have insurance, head to **California Pacific Medical Center** at 2333 Buchanan St. at Sacramento Street (✆ **415/600-6000**).

HOTLINES The following hotlines are available in San Francisco: **Poison Control Center** (✆ 800/876-4766), **Rape Crisis Center** (✆ 415/647-7273), and **Family Service Agency** (✆ 415/474-7310).

INFORMATION The **San Francisco Visitor Information Center** is in the lower level of Hallidie Plaza, 900 Market St., at Powell Street (✆ **415/391-2000;** www.onlyinsanfrancisco.com).

INTERNET ACCESS Perhaps because everyone already has a computer here, San Francisco has few Internet cafes. The closest one to Union Square is **Cafe.com,** 120 Mason St. near Eddy Street (✆ **415/433-4001**), open daily. Other options, without the ambience, include **Copy Central,** 110 Sutter St. at Montgomery Street (✆ **415/392-6470**), and **FedEx Kinko's,** 1967 Market St., near Gough (✆ **415/252-0864**). If you are staying in the Marina, the closest FedEx Kinko's is on 3225 Fillmore St. near Lombard Street (✆ **415/441-2995**). The **Main Library,** 100 Larkin St. at McAllister Street (✆ **415/557-4400**), also has a number of terminals you can use for free. If you have your own computer, several places offer wireless Internet access, including some hotel lobbies and cafes like the **Grove,** with locations on Chestnut Street and Fillmore Street (see chapter 5).

INSURANCE Although it's not required of travelers, health insurance is highly recommended. Most health insurance policies cover you if you get sick away from home—but verify that you're covered before you depart, particularly if you're insured by an HMO.

International visitors should note that unlike many other countries, the United States does not usually offer free or low-cost medical care to its citizens or visitors. Doctors and hospitals are expensive, and in most cases will require advance payment or proof of coverage before they render their services. Good policies will cover the costs of an accident, repatriation, or death. Packages such as **Europ Assistance's "Worldwide Healthcare Plan"** are sold by European automobile clubs and travel agencies at attractive rates. **Worldwide**

Assistance Services, Inc. (✆ **800/777-8710;** www.worldwideassistance.com) is the agent for Europ Assistance in the United States.

Though lack of health insurance may prevent you from being admitted to a hospital in non-emergencies, don't worry about being left on a street corner to die: The American way is to fix you now and bill the living daylights out of you later.

LEGAL AID If you are "pulled over" for a minor infraction (such as speeding), never attempt to pay the fine directly to a police officer; this could be construed as attempted bribery, a much more serious crime. Pay fines by mail, or directly into the hands of the clerk of the court. If accused of a more serious offense, say and do nothing before consulting a lawyer. Here the burden is on the state to prove a person's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, and everyone has the right to remain silent, whether he or she is suspected of a crime or actually arrested. Once arrested, a person can make one telephone call to a party of his or her choice. International visitors should call your embassy or consulate.

LOST & FOUND Be sure to tell all of your credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two. Visa's U.S. emergency number is ✆ **800/847-2911** or 410/581-9994. American Express cardholders and traveler's check holders should call ✆ **800/221-7282.** MasterCard holders should call ✆ **800/307-7309** or 636/722-7111. For other credit cards, call the toll-free number directory at ✆ **800/555-1212.**

If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union** (✆ **800/325-6000;** www.westernunion.com).

MAIL At press time, domestic postage rates were 27¢ for a postcard and 42¢ for a letter. For international mail, a first-class letter of up to 1 ounce costs 94¢ (72¢ to Canada and Mexico). For more information go to **www.usps.com** and click on "Calculate Postage."

MAPS The best city map I've seen and used is the **San Francisco Transit Rider Map and Guide,** published by Great Pacific Recreation and Travel Maps (www.greatpacificmaps.com). Order a copy from the company's website or buy one at the Visitors Information Center. You can also find it for $6 at many Walgreen's stores. AAA is an excellent source of maps, free to members.

MEASUREMENTS See the chart on the inside front cover of this book for details on converting metric measurements to U.S. equivalents.

NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES The major papers are the morning *San Francisco Chronicle* and the afternoon *San Francisco Examiner.* They are distributed from sidewalk kiosks and boxes. The free weekly *San Francisco Bay Guardian* is the best source of events listings. Find a copy in cafes and in sidewalk newspaper boxes around the city. *San Francisco* and *7×7* magazines are the monthly city glossies at newsstands everywhere.

PASSPORTS **For Residents of Australia:** You can pick up an application from your local post office or any branch of Passports Australia, but you must schedule an interview at the passport office to present your application materials. Call the **Australian Passport Information Service** at ✆ **131-232,** or visit the government website at www.passports.gov.au.

For Residents of Canada: Passport applications are available at travel agencies throughout Canada or from the central **Passport Office,** Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (✆ **800/567-6868;** www.ppt.gc.ca). As of June 1, 2009, Canadian residents arriving in the United States by sea or land will be required to have a valid passport; those arriving by air have already been required to have a passport or NEXUS card used at designated airports.

For Residents of Ireland: You can apply for a 10-year passport at the **Passport Office,** Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (✆ **01/671-1633;** www.irlgov.ie/iveagh). Those under age 18 and over 65 must apply for a €12 3-year passport. You can also apply at 1A South Mall, Cork (✆ **021/272-525**) or at most main post offices.

For Residents of New Zealand: You can pick up a passport application at any New Zealand Passports Office or download it from their website. Contact the **Passports Office** at ✆ **0800/22-5050** in New Zealand or +64-4/474-8100, or log on to www.passports.govt.nz.

For Residents of the United Kingdom: To pick up an application for a standard 10-year passport (5-yr. passport for children under 16), visit your nearest passport office, major post office, or travel agency, or contact the **United Kingdom Passport Service** advice line at ✆ 0300 222 0000 or search its website at www.ukpa.gov.uk.

PETS All the hotels in the Kimpton chain (such as the Monaco, Serrano, and Argonaut) accept dogs and cats, as do some upscale properties like the St. Regis. The Joie de Vivre hotel chain is also pet friendly. Other hotels, such as the Nikko, limit pets to dogs. Dogs must be leashed in most city parks, and you must pick up after them.

PHARMACIES **Walgreens,** the Starbucks of drugstores, has stores just about everywhere. Phone ✆ **800/WALGREEN** (925-47336; www.walgreens.com) for the address and phone number of the nearest store. Around Union Square, the Walgreen's at 459 Powell St., at Sutter St. (✆ **415/984-0793**), is open 24 hours, but the pharmacy portion has more limited hours. Branches at 3201 Divisadero St. (at Lombard St.; ✆ **415/931-6497**) and 498 Castro St. (at 18th St.; ✆ **415/861-3136**) have 24-hour pharmacies.

POLICE The emergency number is ✆ **911.** Call from any phone (no coins are needed from pay phones). The non-emergency number is ✆ 415/553-0123.

RESTROOMS Dark green public lavatories are located by Union Square on Geary Street, on the waterfront at PIER 39, on Market Street near the cable car turnaround, on Powell Street, and at the Civic Center, among other locations. They cost 25¢ and are clean and safe. Also try hotels, museums, department stores, and service stations. Most restaurants reserve their facilities for patrons only.

SMOKING California law prohibits smoking in public buildings, restaurants, and bars. Many hotels are completely nonsmoking, and others have limited floors for smokers. Inquire when you phone for reservations.

TAXES Sales tax of 8.5% is added to all purchases. The hotel tax is 14%.

TELEPHONES For directory assistance, dial ✆ **411.** Pay phones (which are getting difficult to find) cost 35¢ to 50¢ for local calls.

Generally, hotel surcharges on long-distance and local calls are astronomical, so you're better off using your **cellphone** or a **public pay telephone.** Many convenience groceries and packaging services sell **prepaid calling cards** in denominations up to $50; for international visitors these can be the least expensive way to call home. Many public phones at airports now accept American Express, MasterCard, and Visa credit cards. **Local calls** made

from public pay phones in most locales cost either 25¢ or 35¢. Pay phones do not accept pennies, and few will take anything larger than a quarter.

Most long-distance and international calls can be dialed directly from any phone. **For calls within the United States and to Canada,** dial 1 followed by the area code and the seven-digit number. **For other international calls,** dial 011 followed by the country code, city code, and the number you are calling.

Calls to area codes **800, 888, 877,** and **866** are toll-free. However, calls to area codes **700** and **900** (chat lines, bulletin boards, "dating" services, and so on) can be very expensive—usually a charge of 95¢ to $3 or more per minute, and they sometimes have minimum charges that can run as high as $15 or more.

For **reversed-charge or collect calls,** and for person-to-person calls, dial the number 0 then the area code and number; an operator will come on the line, and you should specify whether you are calling collect, person-to-person, or both. If your operator-assisted call is international, ask for the overseas operator.

For **local directory assistance** ("information"), dial 411; for long-distance information, dial 1, then the appropriate area code and 555-1212.

TIME ZONE California is on Pacific Standard Time, 3 hours behind New York and 8 hours behind London.

VISAS For information about U.S. visas go to **http://travel.state.gov** and click on "Visas." Or go to one of the following websites:

Australian citizens can obtain up-to-date visa information from the **U.S. Embassy Canberra,** Moonah Place, Yarralumla, ACT 2600 (✆ **02/6214-5600**); from the Consulates-General in Perth, Sydney, or Melbourne, or by checking the U.S. Diplomatic Mission's website at **http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/consular**.

British subjects can obtain up-to-date visa information by calling the **U.S. Embassy Visa Information Line** (✆ **09042-450100**) or by visiting the "Visas to the U.S." section of the American Embassy London's website at **www.usembassy.org.uk**.

Irish citizens can obtain up-to-date visa information through the **Embassy of the USA Dublin,** 42 Elgin Rd., Dublin 4, Ireland (✆ **353/1-668-8777**); or by checking the "Consular Services" section of the website at **http://dublin.usembassy.gov**.

Citizens of **New Zealand** can obtain up-to-date visa information by contacting the **U.S. Embassy New Zealand,** 29 Fitzherbert Terrace, Thorndon, Wellington (✆ **644/472-2068**); or get the information directly from the "For New Zealanders" section of the website at **http://**newzealand.usembassy.gov. The telephone number for specific visa information is ✆ **0900 878 472.**

2 TOLL-FREE NUMBERS & WEBSITES

MAJOR U.S. AIRLINES

(*flies internationally as well)

Alaska Airlines
✆ 800/252-7522
www.alaskaair.com

American Airlines*
✆ 800/433-7300 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 020/7365-0777 (in U.K.)
www.aa.com

Continental Airlines*
✆ 800/523-3273 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 084/5607-6760 (in U.K.)
www.continental.com

Delta Air Lines*
✆ 800/221-1212 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 084/5600-0950 (in U.K.)
www.delta.com

Frontier Airlines
✆ 800/432-1359
www.frontierairlines.com

Hawaiian Airlines*
✆ 800/367-5320 (in U.S. and Canada)
www.hawaiianair.com

JetBlue Airways
✆ 800/538-2583 (in U.S.)
✆ 080/1365-2525 (in U.K. or Canada)
www.jetblue.com

Midwest Airlines
✆ 800/452-2022
www.midwestairlines.com

North American Airlines*
✆ 800/371-6297
www.flynaa.com

Northwest Airlines
✆ 800/225-2525 (in U.S.)
✆ 870/0507-4074 (in U.K.)
www.flynaa.com

United Airlines*
✆ 800/864-8331 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 084/5844-4777 (in U.K.)
www.united.com

US Airways*
✆ 800/428-4322 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 084/5600-3300 (in U.K.)
www.usairways.com

Virgin America*
✆ 877/359-8474
www.virginamerica.com

CAR RENTAL AGENCIES

Advantage
✆ 800/777-5500 (in U.S.)
✆ 021/0344-4712 (outside of U.S.)
www.advantagerentacar.com

Alamo
✆ 800/GO-ALAMO (800/462-5266)
www.alamo.com

Avis
✆ 800/331-1212 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 084/4581-8181 (in U.K.)
www.avis.com

Budget
✆ 800/527-0700 (in U.S.)
✆ 087/0156-5656 (in U.K.)
✆ 800/268-8900 (in Canada)
www.budget.com

Dollar
✆ 800/800-4000 (in U.S.)
✆ 800/848-8268 (in Canada)
✆ 080/8234-7524 (in U.K.)
www.dollar.com

Enterprise
✆ 800/261-7331 (in U.S.)
✆ 514/355-4028 (in Canada)
✆ 012/9360-9090 (in U.K.)
www.enterprise.com

Hertz
✆ 800/645-3131
✆ 800/654-3001 (for international reservations)
www.hertz.com

National
✆ 800/CAR-RENT (800/227-7368)
www.nationalcar.com

Payless
✆ 800/PAYLESS (800/729-5377)
www.paylesscarrental.com

Rent-A-Wreck
✆ 800/535-1391
www.rentawreck.com

Thrifty
✆ 800/367-2277
✆ 918/669-2168 (international)
www.thrifty.com

MAJOR HOTEL & MOTEL CHAINS

Best Western International
✆ 800/780-7234 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 0800/393-130 (in U.K.)
www.bestwestern.com

Comfort Inns
✆ 800/228-5150
✆ 0800/444-444 (in U.K.)
www.comfortinnchoicehotels.com

Courtyard by Marriott
✆ 888/236-2427 (in U.S.)
✆ 0800/221-222 (in U.K.)
www.marriott.com/courtyard

Crowne Plaza Hotels
✆ 888/303-1746
www.ichotelsgroup.com/crowneplaza

Days Inn
✆ 800/329-7466 (in U.S.)
✆ 0800/280-400 (in U.K.)
www.daysinn.com

Doubletree Hotels
✆ 800/222-TREE (800/222-8733; in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 087/0590-9090 (in U.K.)
www.doubletree.com

Econo Lodges
✆ 800/55-ECONO (800/553-2666)
www.choicehotels.com

Embassy Suites
✆ 800/EMBASSY (800/362-2779)
www.embassysuites1.hilton.com

Fairfield Inn by Marriott
✆ 800/228-2800 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 0800/221-222 (in U.K.)
www.marriott.com/fairfieldinn

Four Seasons
✆ 800/819-5053 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 0800/6488-6488 (in U.K.)
www.fourseasons.com

Hampton Inn
✆ 800/HAMPTON (800/426-7866)
www.hamptoninn.hilton.com

Hilton Hotels
✆ 800/HILTONS (800/445-8667; in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 087/0590-9090 (in U.K.)
www.hilton.com

Holiday Inn
✆ 800/315-2621 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 0800/405-060 (in U.K.)
www.holidayinn.com

Howard Johnson
✆ 800/446-4656 (in U.S. and Canada)
www.hojo.com

Hyatt
✆ 888/591-1234 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 084/5888-1234 (in U.K.)
www.hyatt.com

La Quinta Inns and Suites
✆ 800/642-4271 (in U.S. and Canada)
www.lq.com

Marriott
✆ 877/236-2427 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 0800/221-222 (in U.K.)
www.marriott.com

Quality
✆ 877/424-6423 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 0800/444-444 (in U.K.)
www.qualityinn.com

Radisson Hotels & Resorts
✆ 888/201-1718 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 0800/374-411 (in U.K.)
www.radisson.com

Ramada Worldwide
✆ 888/2-RAMADA (888/272-6232; in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 080/8100-0783 (in U.K.)
www.ramada.com

Red Carpet Inns
✆ 800/251-1962
www.bookroomsnow.com

Renaissance
✆ 888/236-2427
www.renaissancehotel.com

Residence Inn by Marriott
✆ 800/331-3131
✆ 800/221-222 (in U.K.)
www.marriott.com/residenceinn

Sheraton Hotels & Resorts
✆ 800/325-3535 (in U.S.)
✆ 800/543-4300 (in Canada)
✆ 0800/3253-5353 (in U.K.)
www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton

Travelodge
✆ 800/578-7878
www.travelodge.com

Westin Hotels & Resorts
✆ 800/937-8461 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 0800/3259-5959 (in U.K.)
www.starwoodhotels.com/westin

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts
✆ 877/999-3223 (in U.S. and Canada)
✆ 050/6638-4899 (in U.K.)
www.wyndham.com

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San Francisco Bay
San Francisco TRANSIT
Cable Car
Bus Line
BART line and stop
Muni Metro line and stop
F-Market Streetcar
Transit line beginning/end
0 1/4 mi
0 0.25 km
FISHERMAN'S WHARF
Pier 33 (Ferries to Alcatraz)
FORT MASON
To the Marina
"Crookedest Street"
RUSSIAN HILL
TELEGRAPH HILL
Coit Tower
NORTH BEACH
COW HOLLOW
To the Presidio
PACIFIC HEIGHTS
Lafayette Park
CHINATOWN
Transamerica Pyramid
Ferry Building
Ferry Transit Terminal
BART/Muni Embarcadero
Muni Folsom
Bay Bridge
NOB HILL
UNION SQUARE
Transbay Terminal
BART/Muni Montgomery St.
BART/Muni Powell
To the Japan Center, Richmond District, Lincoln Park
To Alamo Square, Golden Gate Park
CIVIC CENTER
BART/Muni Civic Center
SOMA
South Park
Muni 2nd & King
AT&T Park
HAYES VALLEY
Muni Van Ness
Muni 4th & King
Caltrain Station
Muni Mission Rock
Mission Rock Terminal
MISSION BAY
To the Castro
BART 16th St./ Mission
THE MISSION
POTRERO HILL
IMPORTANT BUS & STREETCAR LINES FOR TRAVELERS
5 21 Civic Center, Alamo Square Historic District, Golden Gate Park
7 71 Via Haight & Market to Golden Gate Park, Haight-Ashbury
38 Via Geary Blvd. to Japan Center, Richmond District, Lincoln Park
30 North Beach, Union Square, Fisherman's Wharf
9X Via Kearny to North Beach, Chinatown
41 45 Via Union St. to the Presidio, Pacific Heights
F F-Market Streetcar
PM Powell-Mason Cable Car
PH Powell-Hyde Cable Car
C California Cable Car

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- Live out their favorite nursery rhymes

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